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ABSTRACT

This study investigated differences in patterns of governance policies, practices, and attitudes between higher and lower performing urban Ohio school districts. Public domain data included official district records, state documents, and newspaper articles. Case studies of four districts found that districts were similar on the DeRolph v. State of Ohio funding lawsuit, levies dominating recent major events, and in handling of IDEA requirements. All districts used a committee structure as an organizing mechanism. There were some differences in contractual issues and level and distribution of human resources for operation, though they were not identifiable on the basis of performance level. The first noticeable difference related to community economics. Lower performing districts had lower median family incomes and more families living in poverty than did higher performing districts. Board members as governance leaders in lower performing districts focused more on personal issues than those in higher performing districts. In lower performing districts, critics emphasized past failures (versus future orientation and higher expectations in higher performing districts). Lower performing districts had multiple, separate, long-range plans. Higher performing districts had fewer, but somewhat related, plans. Higher performing districts based decisions on data and sought community involvement in planning more than lower performing districts. Strong, consistent leadership was more evident in higher performing districts. (Contains 34 references.) (SM)

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April 2003

Characteristics of Higher and Lower Performing Urban School Districts in Ohio: Furthering the Development of Criteria Useful in Evaluating Urban School Governance

Executive Summary

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The Research Problem

The U.S. Secretary for Education, Rod Paige, suggested a starting point when he said, "Where there is a good school district, there is a good school board; the reverse is also true" (Paige, 2002, p. 4). Yet, Cuban noted in 2001 that it was a flawed to assume that the same systemic reform would work in any district and that any good leader could make it happen. He noted, "These expectation imply that leading city schools is the same as leading suburban, small town and rural schools. That is not the case at all. Crucial differences distinguish urban school leaders from those in other districts" (Cuban, 2001, p. 5; Cuban & Usdan, 2002, p. 3).

The Issue

Given the generally common legal setting for the urban districts of Ohio, one might expect them to have had common governance capabilities. This did not appear to be so. While none of the districts earned the highest ratings from the state, several consistently out performed the others. Certainly many factors came into play to cause those differences, the contribution of the governance leadership of the districts was one aspect that seemed understudied and worthy of examination.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate patterns of governance policies, practices, attitudes that are different in higher and lower performing urban school districts in the state of Ohio. The objectives of the study were to identify urban Ohio districts with higher student

achievement and districts with lower student achievement and to analyze their public disclosures in such a way as to establish a governance profile of the districts. A final objective was to identify criteria that might be useful in determining the content validity of an instrument being developed for the evaluation of governance aspects of urban school districts.

Methods

Considering the ultimate goal of the study, the governance checklist, the research team collected data from the selected districts that was information available in the public domain. This information was part of the official district records, state documents, and local newspaper articles. Furthermore, with gentle persistence a citizen could acquire other public information through the district's central office.

Selection of the Districts for This Study and Data Collection

The 18 criteria listed in the ORC 3317.012 were restated as 18 criteria (primarily Ohio Proficiency Test scores are various grade levels, attendance and graduation rates). Five year average percentages for each of the 18 criteria were used to identify the districts with the highest and lowest average scores.

Four researchers were selected to conduct an in-depth case study/analysis of one of the districts.

Analysis

With the four case studies in hand, one of the co-primary researchers created a master table of the cases. The four case study reports were read, analyzed, compared, contrasted, and summarized.

Results

The researchers found that the target districts appeared alike on the DeRolph v. State of Ohio funding lawsuit, on levies as dominating the major events of the districts' recent histories, and the handling of IDEA requirements. Also, all the districts used a committee structure as an organizing mechanism for the board with differences only in the number and or names of the committees.

There were some differences among the districts in the contractual issues they faced and the level and distribution of human resources for the operation of the districts. These differences, however, were not identifiably different on the basis of higher or lower performing districts.

The first noticeable difference between the higher and lower performing districts was with the economics of the districts' communities. The lower performing districts had lower median house family incomes and a higher percent of families living in poverty than did the better performing districts. While not directly an aspect of governance of the districts, the economic situation of a district's population was certainly something that those governing the district had to take into consideration as it sought improved performance from its students.

The board members as governance leaders in the lower performing districts seemed to focus more on personal issues than those in the better performing districts. The focus for the better performing districts tended to be more on district improvement than on personal agenda.

In looking at the OPT and critics of the district's performance, it seemed that in lower performing districts the focus of the critics was on past failures. In the better performing districts, the critics seemed to take a future orientation and focus on higher expectations. The difference is subtle but potentially significant in moving a district forward.

All the districts had long-range plans. A difference between the two sets of districts might be that the lower performing districts seemed to have multiple, apparently separate long-range plans, one after the other, while the better performing districts seemed to have had fewer but somewhat related plans that were more accessible to the public both during and after the planning process.

In reviewing court cases in which the districts were involved, insofar as they were mentioned in the public exposure of the district, it seemed that the lower performing districts were involved in more court cases than the better performing districts. At the least, the public exposure of their court cases was less for the better performing districts than the lesser performing districts.

From the public record of the districts, it appeared that the better performing districts tended to seek and obtain community involvement in the planning and/or decision making processes before major policy issues came before the board. On the other hand, the boards of the lesser performing districts appeared to bring policy issues up and then seek or accept public comment and be swayed by it after the district staff had developed the policy and/or action plan.

There was not clear evidence of much reliance on data as the basis for decision making in the governance of the four districts. Nonetheless, it seemed that the higher performing districts tended to base their decisions on data more than did the lower performing districts. Although not necessarily a causal relationship, the better performing districts did appear to make more data available in their public exposures than did the lower performing districts. It appeared that more data were available to the board members as well as the public in the higher performing districts than in the lower performing districts.

All four districts exhibited some poor management practices, especially about fiscal management. However, strong, consistent leadership seemed more evident in the better performing districts than in the lesser performing districts. In one of the better performing districts the strength and consistency seemed to come from the board. In the other district it seemed to come from the superintendent.

E-governance did not seem to be a major factor for any of the districts although the higher performing districts did appear to have more information available on their websites than did the lower performing districts.

Limitations of the Study

The limited number of districts included in this study certainly limited the ability to generalize the findings and the conclusions to a larger context.

This study was limited to urban districts in the state of Ohio, which operate under the same statutes and state court decisions. Studies of urban districts in other states might not elicit parallel findings due to differences in governing law whether legislative or court decisions.

While an attempt was made to view the governance of these districts from multiple aspects, the view still was restricted to a limited number of variables. While the researchers believed the variables chosen would be the most telling, an examination of some different variables might have given different results and conclusions.

The definition of urban districts utilized by the researchers (student enrollment of over 5,000 with more than 5% of the students receiving Aid to Dependent Children) would call into question any attempt to generalize this study's conclusions to the largest urban districts.

Significance of Study

While the conclusions of this study cannot be put forward as definitive statements about the differences between higher and lower performing urban school districts in Ohio, they do offer several important contributions to the study of urban school district governance. This is one of the few studies to try and relate district governance and student achievement. It appears to be the only one focused on a comparison of higher and lower performing urban districts that operate under a common legal system. As such its conclusions offer possible directions for future research on differences between districts both to seek replication of the findings and to develop a means for an urban district to study the effectiveness of its own governance practices.

Going a step farther, if further studies confirm even some of the conclusions of this study, it may be possible to develop an instrument or tool to diagnose the effectiveness a district's governance policies and practices. Such an instrument would enable governance leaders to analyze themselves and generate self-knowledge that should lead to improvement of the governance of the district. Also, the existence and use of such an instrument by the media or the general public might focus the accountability of governance leaders on issues that truly make a difference to the primary purpose for the existence of the school district, student achievement.

There are two lines of research that could be next steps from this research. One is to begin the development of a checklist or inventory of governance policies and practices that appear correlated to student achievement in urban districts. Potentially, this would yield means to use publicly available data to create comparative "dash board" indicators to monitor the relationship between governance and achievement. At this time a combination of information from the literature, the experiences of those who consult with boards of education, and research like this could provide for a set of exploratory concepts with value for leaders of urban school

districts. The second line of research would be the duplication of this effort in other states with multiple urban areas, followed up with comparisons across stateliness. It is hoped that these two lines of research might lead to public education indicators preferable to, or in augmentation of, the heavy reliance of high stakes achievement tests to assess the quality of education.

References

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Characteristics of Higher and Lower Performing Urban School Districts in Ohio: Furthering the Development of Criteria Useful in Evaluating Urban School Governance

The Research Problem

In the 122 session of the Ohio general assembly the legislature labeled 21 districts as urban districts. In the next (1998-1999) school year, 18 of these districts were labeled as being in Academic Emergency, the lowest rating given to school districts under the state's five level rating scale. Of the other three, two were in the second lowest rating, Academic Watch, and one was in the middle category, Continuous Improvement. Over the next several school years the number of districts rated Academic Emergency dropped to 15 and then, under slightly less stringent standards, to 10 and 11. Throughout this time and, indeed, before 1999, several of the 21 districts were consistently at the bottom of the ratings and several were consistently at the top of the urban 21 in the ratings received. Most of the urban districts in Ohio, then, are unable to demonstrate that their students are achieving at acceptable levels.

As the editors of *Education Week* wrote a few years ago, "It's hard to exaggerate the education crisis in America's cities....[I]t is here that most states face the greatest gap between their expectations for students and the current reality" (*Education Week* Editors, 1998) Ohio's cities share that burden. And, just as the editors noted that some urban districts across the country were rising to meet the challenge, so it appears that a few urban districts in Ohio are meeting the challenge better than the others.

While the 21 urban school districts represent approximately 3.5% of the districts in Ohio, they serve over 22% of all the children in schools, public and private, in the state for the 2000-

2001 school year according to data on the Ohio Department of Education website (2002). Solving even some of the problems underlying the achievement gap between the best and the worst of the city districts, let alone between the urban and the non-urban districts, has the potential for significant impact on children of the state.

The study detailed in this report inquired into the possible relationship between school governance and student achievement. An obvious element of school governance is the role of the board of education. The U.S. Secretary for Education, Rod Paige, suggested the board as a starting point when he said, "Allow me to be blunt here. Where there is a good school district, there is a good school board; the reverse is also true" (Paige, 2002, p. 4). The research team, however, acknowledged that governance responsibility does not reside only with the board of education. We expected a much more complex picture of governance. For instance, we anticipated that district leadership and the involvement of the citizenry would contribute importantly to the findings of the study. Our focus on urban schools is underscored by the assumption that the challenges of governance in these schools are perhaps unique, and that systemic school reform might progress differently than it would in a suburban district. We intended to probe for this uniqueness, searching for evidence to support Cuban's opinion that "crucial differences distinguish urban school leaders from those in other districts" (Cuban, 2001, p. 5; Cuban & Usdan, 2002, p. 3).

Urban districts serve a higher proportion of the state's children than do the other types of districts. Some are succeeding better than others on a consistent basis. According to Paige's statement, those boards are somehow better than the boards of the less effective school districts.

The Issue

Given the generally common legal setting for the urban districts of Ohio, one might expect them to have had common governance capabilities. This did not appear to be so. While none of the districts earned the highest ratings from the state, several were consistently out performing the others. Certainly many factors came into play to cause those differences, however, the contributions of the governance leadership of the districts was one aspect that seemed understudied and worthy of examination.

The Research Literature

Governance and Sources of Authority

Governance was defined by Carver as, "the process by which a small group of people, usually on behalf of others, exercises authority over an organization" (2000, p. 26). Incorporating that concept even in the act of defining limitations on the authority of the few by extending authority to the members of the group, Golarz and Golarz define "participatory governance" as "the transfer of authority and responsibility from those who hold power by virtue of law, contract, or organizational role to those not so empowered" (1995, p. 4). Incorporating both those definitions is Bauman, "Formally, governance is the exercise of public authority to achieve common goals as determined by a democratic majority" (1996, p. 19).

It is important to note that that governance is not the purpose of education but a means to its fundamental goals, that is expressed variously as student learning (Resnick, 1999, p. 8), the continuous improvement of all students (Hoachlander, & Beltraneana, 2001, p. 25), and the improvement of student achievement (Bolton, 2000, p. 9). Beyond this goal lie broader goals related to shaping the social and economic future of the community (Cibulka, 1997; Bauman, 1996).

A second point is that governance works through policy statements that are essentially public decisions (Bauman, p. 21). These public documents represent, for all intents and purposes, bargained outcomes that express an accommodation among three perspectives of policy: (a) an institutional perspective seeking to express the accommodation of interested stakeholders, (b) a rational/technical perspective interested in the means by which the policy is implemented, and (c) an interpretive perspective dealing with the ambiguous and subjective meanings attached to the policy statement (Cibulka & Derlin, 1998, pp. 503 & 513). The necessity of attending to these multiple perspectives contributes to policy complexity and ambiguity. As such, policies could be judged successful and unsuccessful at the same time, depending on the perspectives taken and the relative emphasis given to the primary and other goals of the governance of schools.

Institutional governance is afflicted by institutional politics, but it must also accommodate influence by those outside the institution. Policy decisions must fit within the guidelines of outside entities. Adjustment to policy follows from the recognition that the district, the parents, and the unions are separate and powerful forces (Kirtman, 2002, p. 18; Lieberman, 1997, pp. 4, 89, 228-229). To that short list one must add the corporate sector, private foundations, and groups representing specific ethnic, religious, and other special interest populations, and state politics (Spring, 2002, pp. 16-17). National and state governing bodies seem to be taking more and more control away from the local district (Bauman, 1996, p. 134; Sergiovanni, 1999, p. 9).

The governance teams legislated in Ohio, board of education, superintendent, and treasurer, like governance teams across the country did not always have the same job descriptions as today. For instance, superintendents first were supervisors, employed by boards

that interacted directly with their employees and who saw themselves as administrative bodies (Glass, 1992, pp. 3 & 35). The traditional governance structure of most boards seems to draw from the origins of the board superintendent relationship and roughly merge it with the more contemporary chief executive officer conceptualization. "When both the board and the superintendent share decision-making at the operational level, role confusion should not surprise anyone. Confused roles *are* an inevitable by product of such a process" (Dawson & Quinn, 2000, 13).

Though all of these forces do exert some measure of influence, in urban districts today, the tendency is for the educational bureaucracy to have the greatest power (Spring, 2002, p. 156; Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres, 1997, p. 103). Vying for dominance within this bureaucratic power are two somewhat different conceptions of participatory governance, both of which advocate for enhanced participation in the governance of school districts. One conception argues for broad, community involvement (Welsh & McGinn, 1999, pp. 40, 62, & 95). This can be conceptualized as inclusionary. The other specifies only the inclusion of teachers and their unions. This second model is, indeed, inclusionary insofar as it includes people other than the traditional district governance figures, but it is also exclusionary in that the participation is limited to professionals, excluding the non-professional, general public (Welsch & McGinn, 1999, p. 95). It is this model, premised on the concept of autonomous professionals rather than partnership with parents, that still dominates schools (Cibulka, 1997, p. 319).

There does not appear to be an answer to what really works in reforming urban schools and school systems. Indeed, currently affecting these efforts are recent all purpose reform solutions that essentially treat all schools in the same way, implying that there is no or little difference between leading urban school districts and suburban and rural districts (Cuban, 2001,

pp 2, 5-6). Yet such schools have agendas related to racial and ethnic isolation and poverty that are not on the plate of most suburban and rural districts (Cuban, 2001, p. 6).

Three reform strategies tend to dominate in urban education—systems reform, strong mayoral, and external intervention—and these strategies tend to be mixed in the urban systems (Cibulka & Boyd, 2002, p. 2). Even within the strategies there are many variations.

Systems reform, that is, ideas and strategies intended to change the underlying system, can be locally determined or can be mimicked from other organizations. In either case, systemic reform is a fluid and ambiguous concept that can lead to many different policy designs and different consequences (Cibulka & Boyd, 2002, pp. 2 & 9). In relation to governance, system reform typically involves the examination and alignment of policies that are necessary requirements for student success.

Strong mayoral control as a reform strategy involves ceding some formal control over a city's schools to the mayor and coalitions supportive of the mayoral intervention with the expectation that the coalitions can provide whatever is lacking toward the achievement of student success in the schools. It is affected by variations in the mayor's capacity to control, stability of incumbents, duration of commitment by the mayor and the civic community, and the capacity of the stakeholders to collaborate (Cibulka & Boyd, 2002, pp. 14-15).

External oversight refers to the intervention in a school district by a governmental body with a level of oversight authority for the district, and it may involve simply sanctions of some sort or go so far as to take control of the district away from the local governance officials. It depends on the capacity of the education professionals to accept the external motivation and their willingness to endure onerous sanctions (Cibulka & Boyd, 2002, p.16-19).

Taken altogether, "Urban school governance is … an adult game, in which the schooling enterprise is tied to many agendas besides the teaching and learning of children in classrooms, although each group often claims to be working only toward this latter goal" (Cibulka, 1997, p. 235).

Governance and Student Learning

There has been very little research on the connection between governance and student outcomes. Ziebarth found little before 1999 (p. 28), as did Cuban and Usdan up to 2002 (Cuban & Usdan, 2002, pp. 8-9). More recently, Land, in a very thorough and extensive review of two decades of literature on the role and effectiveness of boards of education found few empirical studies of board effectiveness, the contextual factors affecting boards, the connections between board policy and student performance, and training for boardsmanship and board effectiveness among others (Land, 2002).

One study that attempted to connect school boards with student achievement, found that there were differences in knowledge and belief between school boards of high achieving districts and those of low achieving districts. (Rice, et al., 2001, pp. 6, 14). These were essentially rural and small town districts that ranged in size from 1,395 to 5,163 students and were selected as comparable to typical districts in the State of Iowa. (Rice, et al., 2001, pp. 5-6, 27).

A second study was set in the Netherlands. The researchers found some positive relationship between boards' including the school team and parents in decision making and increases in achievement in arithmetic and language arts (Hofman, 1995, abstract; Land, 2002, p. 270). In this study, apparently each school had its own board.

What little research there is about governance and student achievement points to attitude or disposition of the board members as a potential factor in improving student performance.

It is against these real and somewhat conflicting concepts of governance that educational restructuring is playing out. On the one hand are calls for more inclusionary approaches to governance. For example, Welsh and McGinn advocate for broad, community involvement (1999, pp. 40, 62, 95) and Kerchner, Koppich, and Weeres argue for teachers and their unions to take charge of improving education (1998, pp. 1, 11, and 13). Lieberman claims that teacher unionization has already shifted power from boards of education to the unions and to the administration (1997, pp. 228-229). Somewhat in agreement with Lieberman, Anyon makes the argument that democratic governance has been tried and has not wrought the desired changes in urban education (1997, pp. 12-13). Yet, it is clear that both democratic governance and bureaucratic structures will continue to exist in public education. The way educational governance works in the future depends on how administrators and policy makers balance the effects of bureaucratic structures with democratic governance (Bauman, 1996, p. 73).

The function of the governance of schools should be to further student learning, its effectiveness determined by demonstrating improvement in achievement. Our review of empirical research uncovered little evidence of a relationship. Thus, between the confusion and variations in factors of governance and lack of links to student learning, our exploratory study was initiated.

Related to the perspective of Ohio urban school districts, the review of the literature leads to two questions: (a) how is the governance of school districts carried out in the urban districts of Ohio and (b) how are school district governance practices related to student achievement?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate patterns of governance realities—policies, practices, attitudes—that are different in higher and lower performing urban school districts in

the state of Ohio. The objectives of the study were to identify urban Ohio districts with higher student achievement and districts with lower student achievement and to analyze their public disclosures in such a way as to establish a governance profile of the districts. This study is a step towards the ultimate goal of the researchers, a governance checklist useable by the general public in the evaluation of governance in urban school districts..

Research Questions

The major question and starting point for this research was: Are there differences in governance structures and practices between the more effective and less effective urban districts in Ohio? If the answer to that question was affirmative, then our follow up question was what are the major differences?

The ultimate goal beyond this particular research project was to develop an instrument that a school board, administrator, or member of the community could use to profile an urban district's governance structure and compare it to a profile that might distinguish between more and less effective urban school districts.

For the purpose of this investigation, Ohio urban school districts were taken as the 21 school districts defined as such by the 122nd session of the Ohio General Assembly and named in the Ohio Department of Education's report *Through the Eyes of Children: A New Vision for Ohio's Urban School Communities*. These are districts having an average daily membership of 5,000 or more and an Aid to Dependent Children population of over 5 percent (Ohio Department of Education, 1997, p. 4). Effectiveness was defined as student performance as measured by Ohio's proficiency tests.

Methods

Considering the ultimate goal of the study, the governance checklist, the research team collected data from the selected districts that was information available in the public domain. This information was part of the official district records, state documents, and local newspaper articles. Furthermore, with gentle persistence a citizen could acquire other public information through the district's central office.

Rationale for Research Design

The design established for this research incorporated a means to identify the more and less efficient urban school districts, a process to develop comparable case studies of the four districts identified, and a comparative analysis of the four case studies on selected topical areas. The identification of two of the least effective and two of the most effective of Ohio's urban school districts was done utilizing the criteria specified by the Ohio legislature in ORC 3317.012 (see appendix A) for identifying school districts to be used in calculating the base cost of an adequate education for fiscal year 1996. Once the districts were identified, four researchers were hired to develop the case studies of the four districts. When the case studies were completed, specific sections were arranged so that the text on the selected topics could be read side-by-side for purposes of comparison and analysis.

By identifying the urban districts utilizing criteria established by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in 1995, the researchers sought to avoid any taint of personal bias in determining the urban districts. While individuals might not agree with the list generated by the ODE, it does represent the political and departmental realities of the state of Ohio as it sought to focus on improving its urban school districts through an initiative begun by the state's then superintendent of schools. Likewise, utilizing the criteria established by the state legislature for

determining the cost of providing an adequate education in Ohio removed the potential for researcher bias to affect the selection process. Beyond that, those criteria reflect the considered judgment of the legislature concerning what ought to be included in the concept of an effective school. It might not fit perfectly with the opinions of many educators, parents, or community members, but it is an expression of the highest policy setting body in the state of Ohio.

Studying either more effective or less effective school districts in isolation may provide information about school districts at those relative levels of effectiveness, but it does not establish to any degree how each is like or different than the other. The hope here was that by studying and comparing districts at the extremes within the set of Ohio urban school districts, some differences, revealed in the districts' public records, would emerge.

Selection of the Districts for This Study

The 18 criteria listed in the ORC 3317.012 were restated as 18 criteria, leaving out the levels defined as indicators of success in the law. These restatements are in Appendix A following the text of the law. The ODE website was searched in the fall of 2001 for a five year history of the data in each of these criteria areas. For graduation rate, the five years were 1996 through 2000; and for the other 17 criteria the data was for the years 1997-2001. The data utilized related to the percent of students passing the various grade level Ohio Proficiency Tests, the percent of students graduating, and the average daily attendance percentage.

To reduce the mass of data to a more manageable size, the data was summarized in several ways. First the percent of students who passed the various OPT tests in a given grade level across the five years were summed to generate a number. This number represented the five-year, four-subject areas total of the percent of students passing each of the OPT tests for the given grade level. This resulted in a single number for each grade included in the criteria, grades

12, 10, 9, and 4. The five years of percentages for the graduation rate and the attendance rate were also summed to give a single number for each of those criteria.

The districts were then ranked from 1 to 21 on each of the six accumulated percentages, four grade level passage rates, graduation rate, and average attendance. The rankings on the four grade level passage rates were added together and multiplied by 4 to reflect the weight given in ORC 3317.012 to the OPT passage rates. To that total were added the rankings for graduation and attendance, and the new total was divided by 18 to yield an average ranking for the district. The average rankings were used to identify the districts with the highest and lowest average rankings on the 18 criteria.

Considering the possibility that the ranking method might mask another relationships between district than simple ordinal ranking could disclose, an alternate ranking method was calculated. For this alternate, the accumulated total passing percentages for the district with the highest total for each of the 4 grade levels and the graduation and attendance rates was designated as 100%. Then the ratio was calculated for each district on each of the six cumulative scores. That is the cumulative total of each district was divided by the cumulative total of the highest district for that particular score, yielding a percent of the highest score. The percent of the highest cumulative passage rates for the grade level passage rates were added together and multiplied by 4 to reflect the weight given in ORC 3317.012 to the OPT passage rates. To that total were added the added the district's graduation and attendance rates, and the new total was divided by 18 to yield an average percentage for the district. The average percentages were used to identify the districts with the highest and lowest average percent of the highest scores on the 18 criteria.

The districts were sorted by both the average rank and the average percent of the highest scores and the compared. The lowest three districts were identical in both methods. The highest district was also the same by both methods although the second district was different.

Since one of the three lowest districts had a form of governance that was different than those of the other urban districts and since it was so new that its effect would not yet have shown up in the data collected on the specified criteria, the other two lowest districts were selected for this study and identified as Alpha and Beta districts. For the two highest districts, the researchers decided to utilize the scale based on the percent of the highest score since it was viewed as giving a more refined picture of the relationships between the districts on the 18 criteria. Those two districts are identified throughout this study as Delta and Gamma districts.

Analysis

Four researchers, all from different Ohio universities at the time of the study, were selected to conduct an in-depth case study/analysis of one of the districts. The case study researchers met with the three principal investigators in late fall 2001 to establish parameters and common understandings related to the study. The research team continued to meet bimonthly through the following spring to update each other on progress and to resolve problems or concerns that were of study-wide impact. Initial drafts of the district case studies were due at the end of spring with final drafts due at the end of August. Between the initial draft submission and the final draft, the co-primary investigators reviewed the drafts and made suggestions and requests for additional information and/or greater clarity.

To pursue our work we chose an exploratory method consistent with our purpose and our resources. We chose data sources that were available to citizens. Citizens motivated to learn about governing and student learning at the local urban school district level have a broad range

of exposures from which they can learn. We have labeled these sources *public exposures* emphasizing their public availability and the fact that they expose the work of governing to those who are interested. We examined in large measure the products of governance and the evidence those products provide about contributions to learning. Congruent with our focus on public exposures, we paid direct attention to the media, primarily the print media, but to a limited extent also to TV and radio reports.

As with the general public, we were not able to view the interactions between and among board members, between the school board and the superintendent; or between and among administrative staff and board members except as exposed through minutes and audio and video tapes of formal work. Private communications such as e-mails, memos, notes, faxes, telephone calls, corridor conversations, and the like are not available to the public and were not available to us. The social sciences have developed sophisticated tools to understand personalities, motivations, beliefs, communications, commitments, and other behaviors of individuals as they relate to institutional attainments. Our resources would not permit us to use such tools.

Was it worth doing such research without employing the most sophisticated methods available? Obviously we believe that it was. We believed two important things. First, it is important to study how improvements in governing urban school districts can be achieved. Second, focusing on public exposures is a first step on the road to improving student learning through effective governance.

Definition of Educational Governance

Educational governance was not a synonym for educational leadership or management. In its largest sense it is the aggregate of formal and informal influences and decisions that create and sustain education in our society. The sources of influences and decisions are multiple,

layered, and complex. Their origins are often historic, anchored in law and constitutions, and subject to change through processes that are known and exercised.

Aspects of Governance to Be Considered

The "big picture" approach was important to our understanding governance and achievement in our urban districts. We were aware that the work of governing is complex, that many were involved, that the products of governance work appeared in diverse forms, and that influences on governing outcomes were both internal and external to urban school systems. We were aware also that the learning of urban youngsters is complex and is reflected only partially in traditional measurements. Thus, consistent with our exploratory commitment, we cast a big net. For example, we sought to identify, in simple terms, whether the agendas school boards pursue, whether the minutes of their meetings (which are public records of their deliberations), and whether the materials they are provided to help with their work were reflective of the level of student learning. We were interested in how and where federal and state mandates came to rest in the governance life of local urban districts and to what extent did the mandates appear to affect student learning?

Another interest under the big tent, were bargained contracts and student learning. Contracts, especially those between urban districts and professional bargaining groups, are becoming the objects of citizen interest in some parts of the country. Do these contracts enhance or inhibit student learning? Our thinking in this respect was guided by Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres' 1997 book *United Mind Workers: Unions and Teaching in the Knowledge Society.*

In order to focus the investigation, the researchers agreed to limit the information search to seven topics that seemed likely to have received public attention in all four districts. Those topics were: (a) school facilities, (b) events related to complying with the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (c) the school funding lawsuit against the state (DeRolph v. the State of Ohio), (d) the Ohio Proficiency Tests (OPT), (e) strategic planning and accreditation issues, including the state-mandated Continuous Improvement Planning (CIP), (f) contractual issues, and (g) court decisions. In relation to those seven issues, the researchers sought answers to the following five questions:

1. What are the structural provisions for governance in the district?
2. What is the priority of impact on student achievement among these centers of influence—local district policy, union contracts, state mandates, court decisions, and the products of planning and collaborative compacts?
3. To what extent are governance decisions data based?
4. Given the governance environment, what are the contributions of leadership and management to academic achievement?
5. Is there evidence that e-governance is emerging and contributing to academic well-being?

The co-primary researchers and the four district case study researchers agreed to a basic outline for the case studies so that the districts might more readily be compared. The outline as agreed is on the left of the table below and the sections and sequence as written in this report are on the right.

The case study researchers submitted the four case studies as scheduled. All seven researchers participated in a conference on urban school district governance sponsored by the Center for the Study Urban and Higher Education at the University of Akron with the support of a grant from a Martha Holden Jennings Foundation. Subsequent to the conference, the co-

principal investigators reviewed the case studies and made requests and suggestions for revisions. The researchers provided final drafts in the early fall of 2002.

Table 1. Sequence of Summaries of the Sections of the Case Studies

Original Research Outline/Sequence for Case Studies	Outline/Sequence Utilized for This Report
Introduction to district	
Demographics	*Population Demographics and Economic Status*
General info as needed	*Distribution of District Human Resource*
Description of the players	
Board members	*Governance Players*
Superintendent	
Others as important	
Summary/timeline of major events within the district as they pertain to the issues	*Major Events and Timeline*
School Facilities	*School Facilities Planning*
IDEA	*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA.)*
DeRolph	*DeRolph v. Ohio*
OPT and its critics	*Ohio Proficiency Tests and Critics*
CIP/Strategic Planning/Accreditation	*Long Range Planning*
Contractual issues	*Contractual Issues*
Court Decisions	*Court Cases Related to Governance Issues*
Attention to each of the 5 questions	
Structures	*Structural Provisions for Governance*
Centers of Influence	*Centers of Influence*
Data-based Decisions	*Data Based Decision Making*
	Access to Data
Leadership/management	*Leadership/Management*
E-Governance	*E-governance*
Final Comments/Learnings	*Final Comments from the Researchers*

Results

With the four case studies in hand, one of the co-primary researchers created a master table of the cases. Each of the parts of the agreed upon outline given above was assigned a row of cells in the table. Each of the case studies was assigned a column in the table and the text of the individual case studies was moved around so that each cell contained information

comparable to each other cell in the topical rows. If no information was available on a topic, that cell was left blank. If information in a given case study could be applied to more than one topic, it was duplicated and placed in the rows for all topics for which it had applicability. The electronic file of this table was shared with the other co-primary researchers for reaction, correction, and advice on subsequent procedures. Only minimal changes were suggested and made.

The same researcher then read, analyzed, and summarized the four cases according to the topical rows of the table. This summary was electronically shared with the other co-primary researchers and the authors of the four case studies. Again, the researchers were asked for critical feedback and suggestions for improvement. Once received, the summary was revised in line with the suggestions and feedback and redistributed to the researchers.

Description of the Cases

Population Demographics and Economic Status

Alpha. Alpha District was a mid-sized central city district with a general population racial make up of approximately 53% white and 47% minorities with African Americans making up over 90% of the minority population (see Table 2.). Its under 18 population comprised approximately 24% of the general population. The racial composition of the population of children was approximately 39% white and 61% minority (see Table 3.). As these numbers indicate, among the general population, the whites were in the majority but among the children, the minorities were the majority. The differences in racial composition between the general population and the children can be seen in Figure 3.

The economic situation for families in Alpha city is shown by the median family income of $34,978 and the per capita income of $15,547. A large percent of the population lived below

Table 2. Racial Distribution in the Total Population

District	% White	% Black	% All Minorities	% Mixed
Alpha	53.4%	43.2%	47.3%	1.8%
Beta	5.0%	92.9%	95.1%	1.5%
Gamma	60.1%	34.4%	40.7%	2.2%
Delta	95.7%	1.0%	5.3%	1.0%

(National Center for Education Statistics (NCEA), [2002], School district)

Table 3. Racial Distribution of Children in the Population

District	% Population Sub 18	% White sub 18	% Black sub 18	% All minorities sub 18	% Racially mixed sub 18
Alpha	24.3%	39.2%	55.6%	61.5%	3.4%
Beta	29.2%	0.8%	96.9%	99.2%	1.8%
Gamma	22.9%	47.2%	45.5%	53.9%	4.3%
Delta	21.3%	93.8%	1.6%	7.8%	2.0%

(National Center for Education Statistics (NCEA), [2002], School district)

Table 4. Economic Indicators for the Selected Urban Districts

Median Income 1999	**Alpha**	**Beta**	**Gamma A**	**Gamma B**	**Delta**
Household	$27,423	$20,552	$46,731	$61,635	$43,920
Family	$34,978	$26,053	$58,028	$75,424	$52,436
Per Capita	$15,547	$12,602	$25,804	$26,949	$21,293
Poverty Status					
Families	18.2%	28.0%	7.4%	2.1%	3.3%
Families with Children <18	27.4%	36.7%	9.1%	2.2%	5.8%
Families with Children <5	33.7%	43.9%	11.3%	2.0%	6.4%
Female householder, no husband	36.3%	39.6%	15.1%	7.9%	9.9%
Female householder, no husband Children <18	45.3%	47.4%	20.5%	9.2%	18.1%
Female householder, no husband Children <5	55.2%	58.7%	28.6%	20.0%	28.3%

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, *Table DP-3.*)

the poverty line with approximately 18% of the families in poverty. Of the families with children likely to be in school, those with children below the age of 18, approximately 27% were living in poverty. It was worse for households headed by women with no husband present. Of those households, with children under the age of 18, 45 % were living in poverty in 1999. Additional information is contained in Table 4. Economic Indicators for the Selected Urban Districts.

Beta. Beta District was an urban fringe district abutting a large core city district. The racial composition of its general population was approximately 5% white and 95% minorities with African Americans comprising nearly 98% of the minority population. (see Table 2.). Its under 18 population comprised just over 29% of the general population. The racial composition of the population of children was just under 1% white and just over 99% minority. As these numbers indicate, among both the general population and the child population, the overwhelming majority of the individuals are minority and nearly all of those were African American. Within that overwhelming majority, it is noteworthy that minority children were a larger proportion of the child population than minorities are of the general population (more than 99% compared to 95%; see Table 3.). The differences in racial composition between the general population and the children can be seen in Figure 3.

The economic situation for families in Beta city is shown by the median family income of $26,053 and the per capita income of $12,602. A large percentage of the population lived below the poverty line with approximately 28.0% of the families in poverty. Of the families with children likely to be in school, those with children below the age of 18, approximately 36.7% were living in poverty. It was worse for households headed by women with no husband present. Of those households, with children under the age of 18, 47.4% were living in poverty in 1999.

Additional information is contained in Table 4. Economic Indicators for the Selected Urban Districts.

Gamma. Gamma District was an urban fringe district abutting a large core city district. The racial composition of its general population was approximately 60% white and 41% minorities with African-Americans comprising nearly 85% of the minority population (see Table 2.). Its under 18 population comprises just under 23% of the general population. The racial composition of the population of children was approximately 47% white and 53% minority (see Table 3.). As these numbers indicate, among the general population, the whites were in the majority, but among the children, the minorities were the majority. The differences in racial composition between the general population and the children can be seen in Figure 3.

The economic situation for families in Gamma district was a bit more complicated to describe. This district was composed of two urban fringe cities, each of which had its own, separate economic data reports. Both are reported here, as they were both somewhat similar and somewhat different. The two cities are referred to as Gamma A and Gamma B.

In Gamma A the median family income was $58,028 and the per capita income was $25,804. A small percentage of the families lived in poverty with approximately 7.4% of the families living in poverty. Of families with children under the age of 18, approximately 9% lived in poverty. As in the other cities being studied, it was worse for households headed by women with no husband present. Of those households, with children under the age of 18, approximately 20% were living in poverty in 1999.

In Gamma B the median family income was $75,424 and the per capita income was $26,949. A very small percentage of the families lived in poverty with approximately 2.1% of the families living in poverty. Of families with children under the age of 18, approximately 2.2%

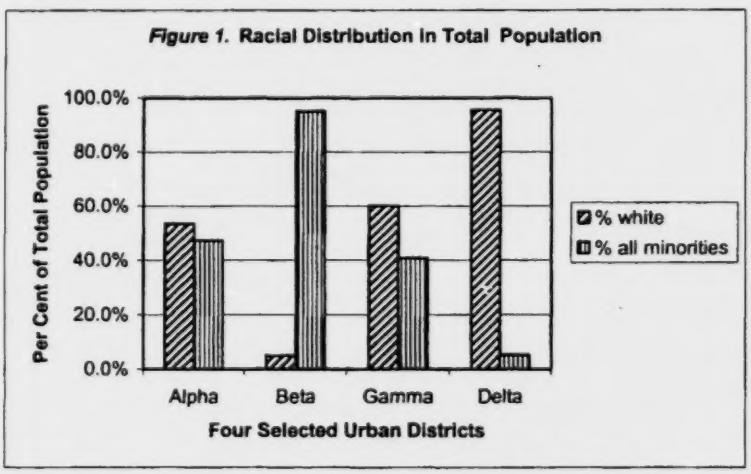
lived in poverty. As elsewhere, it was worse for households headed by women with no husband present. Of those households, with children under the age of 18, approximately 9.2% were living in poverty in 1999. More details can be found in Table 4. Economic Indicators for the Selected Urban Districts.

Delta . Delta District was an urban fringe district a bit larger than Beta and Gamma districts described above. It also abutted a core city. The racial make up of the general population was 95.7% white and 5.3% minorities with African-Americans making up fewer than 19% of the minority population (see Table 2.). The largest sub-group among the minority population was those of Asian descent who are approximately 33% of the small minority population. Delta's under 18 population comprised approximately 21.3% of the general population. The racial composition of the child population was 93.8% white and 7.8% minorities. As in the other districts the minority populations made up a larger percentage of the under 18 population than they did among the general population. Of additional note, the African-American proportion of the under 18 population rose to just under 20% and the Asian population dropped to approximately 23% of the minority population (see Table 3.).

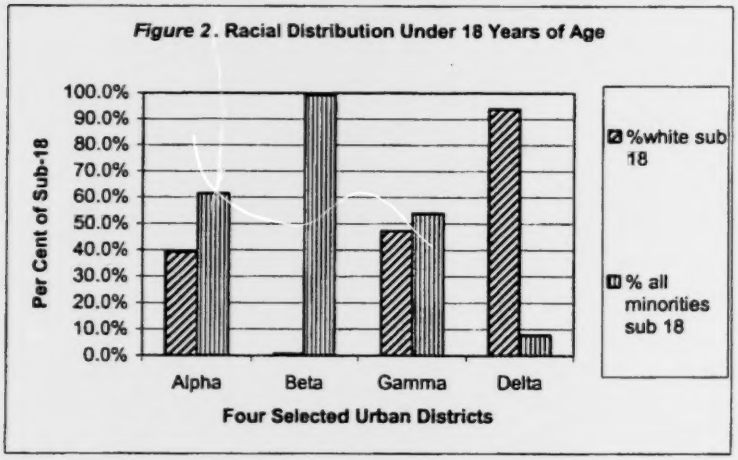
The economic situation for families in Delta city is shown by the median family income of $52,436 and the per capita income of $21,293. A small percentage of the population lived below the poverty line with approximately 3.3% of the families in poverty. Of the families with children likely to be in school, those with children below the age of 18, approximately 5.8% were living in poverty. Again, it was worse for households headed by women with no husband present. Of those household, with children under the age of 18, 18.1% were living in poverty in 1999. Additional information is contained in Table 4. Economic Indicators for the Selected Urban Districts.

Summary of Population Demographics and Economic Status. As can be seen in Figure 1, two of the districts had a rough balance of whites and minorities and two had an almost complete dominance of either whites or minorities. As might be expected, this pattern held true for the population of those under the age of 18, shown in Figure 2. Figure 3 compares the percentage of whites and minorities in the general population with the percentage of whites and minorities in the population of children. In all four districts, there was a greater proportion of children of minority races than the proportion of those races in the general population.

In terms of economic situation, there was a distinct difference between the districts. The two districts with relatively poorer results in student performance were the districts with the lower economic indicators, median and per capita income and percent of families living in poverty. Those two districts, Alpha and Beta, had median family incomes in the $25,000 to $35,000 range while the two higher performing districts, Gamma and Delta, had median family incomes over $50,000 (see *Figure 4*). Poverty rates were glaringly different. Alpha's and Beta's percentage of families with children living in poverty ranged from 27% to 37% while Gamma's and Delta's were in the single digit range of 2% to 9% (see *Figure 5*).



(National Center for Education Statistics (NCEA), [2002], School district)



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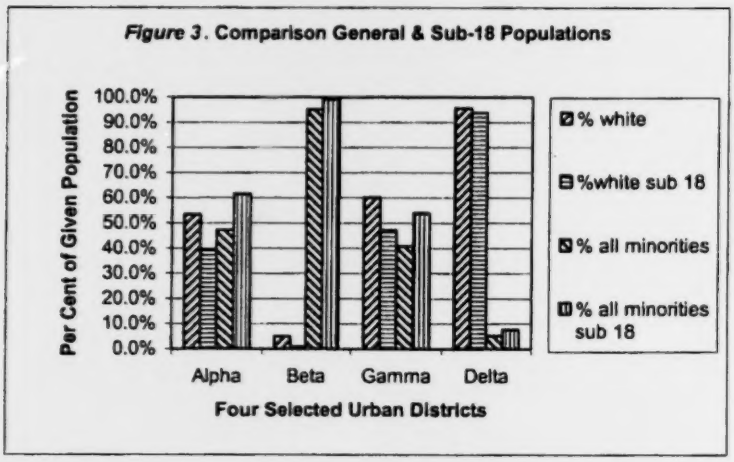

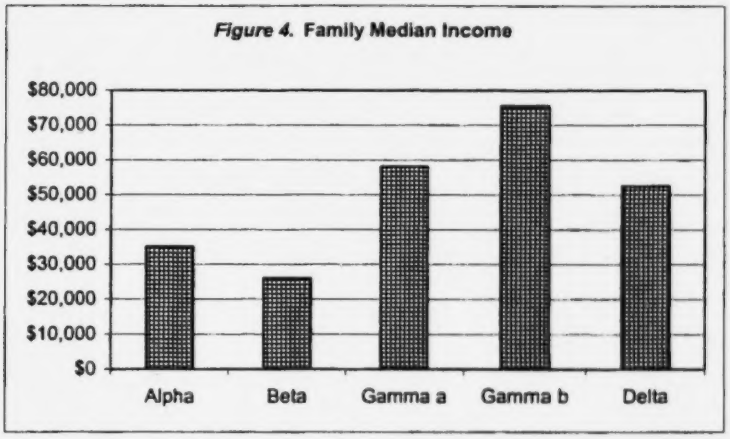

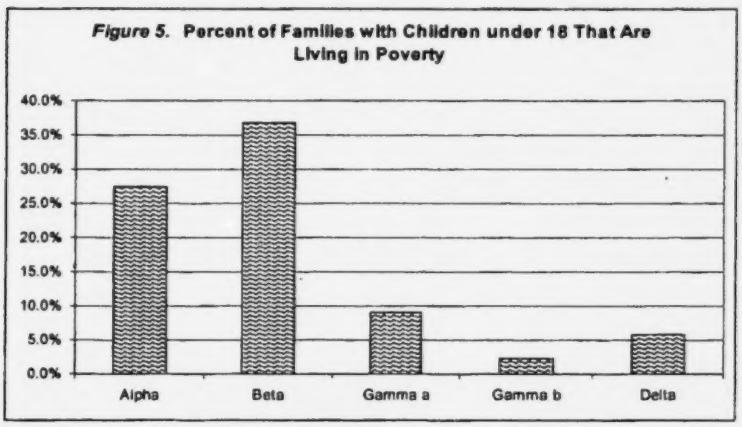

Distribution of District Human Resource

Two types of information are provided in this section: First is the distribution of staff between full-time-equivalent (FTE) teachers and the rest of the district's staff. This is reported in terms of a percentage of the staff counted as FTE teacher and Other Staff and is summarized in Table 5. The second is the utilization of the Other Staff within the given district. In examining this distribution, the numbers provided in the NCES (2002) Common Core of Data were converted to ratios of students per staff member in each category (Table 6). The lower the ratio the greater the number of staff members per student in that particular category. These ratios, in

and of themselves, were not indicative of good or questionable staffing patterns. They simply were what they were. Judgments as to whether a district would be better off with a relatively high or relatively low ratio in any given category are not bound simply to whether the ratio is high or low.

Table 5. Distribution of Staff between Teachers and Others

	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
FTE Teachers as % of staff	48.0%	53.5%	45.3%	48.7%
Staff, other than FTE Teachers, as % of staff	52.0%	46.5%	54.7%	51.3%

(NCES, 2002, Common Core)

Table 6. Ratios of Students Per Staff Member in Various Categories

Number of students for each:	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
FTE Teacher	14.5	14.9	14.3	16.5
Building Administrator	340.9	353.9	332.3	388.1
District Administrator	361.9	353.9	317.9	527.9
Guidance Counselor	1069.2	547.0	300.9	628.4
Librarian-Media Specialist	1680.1	859.6	658.6	1466.3
Instructional Coordinators & Supervisors	3360.2	6017.0	3655.5	None*
Instructional Aides	83.0	102.0	60.3	160.9
Library-Media Support	23522.0	3008.5	664.6	401.1
School Administrative Support	89.6	84.7	81.8	117.3
District Administrative Support	113.5	150.4	117.9	221.8
Student Support Services	564.1	1203.4	430.1	1649.6
Other Support Services	30.1	49.7	31.4	28.7

(NCES, 2002, Common Core)

[* It is possible that Delta has such personnel but does not give them or report them under these titles.]

Alpha. The full time equivalent (FTE) teacher count in Alpha accounted for 48% of the district's staff. This was the third lowest percentage among the four districts being studied (Table 5). It had the lowest student ratios among the four districts in two categories, Instructional Coordinators and Supervisors and District Administrative Support. It had the highest ratios in three categories: (a) Guidance Counselors, (b) Librarian-Media Specialist, and (c) Students/Library-Media Support. Its most frequent ranking was second (five times), that is, its student ratio per staff member in a category was second among the four districts in five of twelve possible situations (Table 7).

Table 7. Rank of District in Terms of Students Per Staff Member in Various Categories

Rank of number of students for each:	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
FTE Teacher	2	3	1	4
Building Administrator	2	3	1	4
District Administrator	3	3	1	2
Guidance Counselor	4	2	1	3
Librarian-Media Specialist	4	2	1	3
Instructional Coordinators & Supervisors	1	3	2	
Instructional Aides	2	3	1	4
Library-Media Support	4	3	2	1
School Administrative Support	3	2	1	4
District Administrative Support	1	3	2	4
Student Support Services	2	3	1	4
Other Support Services	2	4	3	1

(NCES, 2002, Common Core)

Beta. The FTE teacher count in Beta district accounted for 53.5% of the district's staff. This was the highest percentage among the four districts selected for this study. It did not have the lowest ratio of students to Other Staff in any category of Other Staff. And, it had the highest

ratio in only one category, that is, staff devoted to other, non-listed, support services. Beta's most frequent ranking was third (eight times) with a ranking of second occurring three times.

Gamma. The FTE teacher count in Gamma district accounted for 45.3% of the staff. This was lowest percentage among the four districts. It had the lowest student ratio eight times—this was also its most frequent ranking. The eight categories included (a) FTE Teacher, (b) Building Administrators, (c) District Administrators, (d) Guidance Counselors, (e) Librarian-Media Specialist, (f) Instructional Aides, (g) School Administrative Support, and (h) Student Support Services. Gamma did not have the highest student ratios among the four districts in any of the categories reported in the data.

Delta. The FTE teacher count in Delta district accounted for 48.7% of the staff. This was the second highest percentage among the four districts. It had the lowest student ratios among the four districts in two categories, Library-Media Support and Other Support Services. It had the highest ratios in six categories—this was also its most frequent ranking: (a) FTE Teacher, (b) Building Administrators, (c) Instructional Aides, (d) School Administrative Support, (e) District Administrative Support, and (f) Student Support Services.

Summary of Distribution of District Human Resource. In looking at the two districts with the highest percentage of staff devoted to FTE Teachers, one of the lesser performing school districts, Beta, had the highest percentage, and the second highest was Delta, one of the better performing districts. In looking at the two districts with the lowest percentage of staff devoted to FTE Teachers, one of the better performing, Gamma, of the four districts had the lowest percentage, and the other was one of the lesser performing districts.

This same type of pattern continued in the student ratio statistics. There was only one instance where the ratio of students to staff category had the first and second rankings held by

the better performing districts and conversely the third and fourth rankings were held by the lesser performing districts. That category was Library-Media Support. In looking at the number of students per FTE Teacher, the two higher performing districts had both the highest and the lowest ratios. The same situation was true in five other instances: Building Administrators, District Administrator, Instructional Aides, School Administrative Support, and Student Support Services. The lesser performing districts usually were found in the second and third rankings of students per staff category, having the lowest ratio only twice (both times by Alpha), and having the highest ratios four times (three times by Alpha and once by Beta).

The Governance Players

Alpha. In Alpha, one of the lesser performing urban districts, the assigned researcher found information about change in board membership. There was little turnover in board members for most of the previous five years and then a recent election brought an abrupt change with a new majority. The prior board members tended to have their own agendas and to micromanage the administration of the district. Several instances were cited of the board members changing major decisions upon vocal reaction of citizens attending the board meeting. The board was characterized as reactionary, divided, and one willing not to follow its own policies. A fiscal crisis preceded a change of superintendents and a seemingly revolving door in the office of the treasurer. The new majority has just taken control and the results are yet to be seen.

Beta. In Beta, the second of the lesser performing urban districts, the assigned researcher found instances of board members putting other members under attack, challenging the legality of their being seated on the board. Late filings of required election campaign reports with the board of elections led to fines for several members, some more than once. The researcher found

that charges and questions about tax evasion, federal and local, were raised both privately and in the local newspapers. There were questions about the propriety of campaign contributions from contractors seeking to do business with the board. There was a recent change in the superintendency.

Gamma. In Gamma, one of the better performing urban districts in the state, the pattern of board member characteristics that emerged was that all held college degrees, had been involved with the schools either through the PTA or some other venue, and all have or had children or close relatives with children in the district's schools. There was a recent change in the superintendency.

Delta. In Delta, another of the better performing urban school districts in the state, the assigned researcher found a board that had been relatively stable over time had a sudden change in the majority with four of the seven members elected to the board for the first time in 2000 and 2002. Where the previous board had worked with the superintendent on a focus of improving student performance, the new board, led by a particularly vocal member, was focused on the fiscal situation of the district. Apparently the superintendent, board, and treasurer had not paid sufficient attention or planning on maintaining the fiscal health of the district with the result that the district got into a fiscal crisis. With the arrival on the board of the vocal board member, the superintendent was challenged on nearly every fiscal issue and it was a major element of the election campaign that brought a new majority to the board. The new majority ousted the superintendent very quickly. In the treasurer's office a series of short-term treasurers was the story with the current treasurer having been hired shortly after the district's fiscal condition had become public.

Summary of Governance Players. One district in each performance category experienced similar changes in governance over the five years. Both had had relatively stable board membership, both had a fiscal crisis develop, both had a new majority elected who changed the direction of board operations, both had changes in the superintendency, and both had a number of treasurers prior to the current treasurer. A difference appeared to be that the board members in the less well performing districts were characterized by the available information as having personal agendas that seemed to focus on their own well-being. On the other hand the board members in the better performing districts seemed to focus on the improvement of student performance. It would be an interesting study to come back in five years and see if the new majorities, which seem to have been motivated by fiscal crises, will produce positive effects on student achievement.

Major Events and Timeline

Alpha. Throughout the past five years there have been three events that were of an on-going nature. One was the local media coverage of the district, which can be characterized as negative and focused on controversy. Two was the district's initial and continuing status as being in Academic Emergency as reported by the state's Report Card. Three was the emergence of charter schools, particularly when they drain students—and hence funds—from the district early in the year and then return a number of those students in subsequent months.

In 1999 a series of fiscal reports and analyses of the district's fiscal operations led to the departure of the superintendent and turnover in the treasurer's office. The same year also saw a settlement with the local newspaper over application of the Sunshine Laws.

In 2000 there was a controversy over the board's travel, policies, and reimbursement. Board members moved to keep their names and the amount of money authorized for their travel out of the recommendations, instead giving only the conference name, location, and date.

Beginning in 2000 and culminating in 2002 the district negotiated an end to busing for desegregation purposes in the district.

In 2001 there were several controversies that received extensive media coverage. One was over the district's payments for mobile phone service. The other was a series of isolated but problematic situations involving children and the district bus service. Children were missing for a time, dropped at incorrect locations, not picked up, and so forth.

Beta. Throughout the past five years the district has been in Academic Emergency as reported by the state's Report Card.

Levies, contributions, and contracts dominated the major events of Beta district.

In 1997 90% of the funds raised for a levy campaign came from architects, engineers, builders, and lawyers who were later hired for the construction program. The levy's purpose was to provide the district matching funds required to obtain state moneys for facilities renovation and rebuilding. The levy passed and approximately $106 million became available for the construction projects.

In 1997 and subsequently, board members received over $10,000 in campaign contributions primarily from the companies that provide the architectural, engineering, and project management services for the construction program.

Late in 1999 the construction program first broke ground, yet the lead architects had already received more than one million dollars in fees.

In 1999 a former board member and the campaign manager for another board member were hired by architects as paid consultants receiving a total of $35,000 from the project funds. Late in 1999 the firms requested another $180,000 to pay for the services of those individuals over the next several years. State officials have refused to pay the additional money, which was to be paid from state rather than local money.

Gamma. In 1996 a levy failed in the spring and passed in the fall.

In 1997 during negotiations the teachers prepared for a strike but settled and approved a contract. A five-year renewal levy for buildings and grounds passed.

In 1998 all day kindergarten was proposed.

In 1999 a levy failed.

In 2000 the district prepared to cut bussing services and a court ordered postponement of the cuts. Board extended bus services for the remainder of the 1999-2000 school year. Levy failed again and board initiated plans to cut bussing. Teachers rejected a contract offer. A suit was filed to force the district to continue busing; the district refused and the suit was withdrawn. Busing was saved by a state reimbursement.

In 2000 nearly 1000 students were transferred from a neighboring district causing hardships for both districts.

In 2000 the board approved tax abatement of current levies for a major building project in the city. The district was to receive five million dollars immediately and taxes on any future levy increases.

In 2002 the superintendent retired after seven years leading the district.

Delta. In 1997 the board contracted for a facilities audit.

In 1998 the facilities report detailed a need for $110 million in renovations to the district's buildings. The board reduced the recommendations to $65 million and developed a five-year capital improvements plan. An operating levy was up for renewal and the superintendent suggested the need for a new operating levy in addition to renewal. The renewal failed on its first attempt and passed on the second. The new levy never materialized. At the end of the year the treasurer left the district.

In 1999 the state auditor released a detailed analysis of the district's finances indicating that a state takeover could be imminent. A continuing levy to pay for capital improvements and operations was proposed and defeated. The board continued to make cuts to get its finances in order. The financial problems led to the resignation of one board member, and another board member blamed the superintendent for the financial problems. During this year there was an interim treasurer for the first half of the year and then a new treasurer was appointed. This treasurer remained with the district through out this study.

In 2000 a new board member took office and began a pattern of disagreement with the superintendent and the majority of the board. Early in the year the district passed a continuing operating levy and the district settled a contract with the teachers that included a freeze in wages for the current year. Several months later and while working on an additional emergency levy for the fall, the majority on the board approved a major increase in the superintendent's salary and benefits. The resulting outcry caused the superintendent to refuse the raise. The voters passed the levy.

In 2001 five major events took place. One, early in the year, the superintendent proposed a new compensation schedule that give administrative salary hikes to nearly all administrators. Two, in mid-year the board gave the superintendent a substantial pay and benefits increases.

Three, the board member who had established a pattern of disagreeing with the board majority campaigned for candidates who won and established a new majority for the next year. Four, the lame duck board agreed to give the superintendent a contract extension resulting in an outcry fanned by the dissenting board member. Five, the dissenting board member negotiated a settlement that had the superintendent leaving at the original contract's conclusion but serving as a consultant to the new superintendent for several months afterwards.

In 2002 the new board majority took over, established new working ground rules, established tighter fiscal controls than had existed, developed and accepted a new, cheaper facilities plan, passed a renewal levy, and searched for and hired a new superintendent.

Summary of Major Events and Timeline. Money and levies dominated the major events of all four districts. Two districts, one of both the lesser and better performing districts, had fiscal problems develop that were part of the reason for a change in the superintendents and treasurers of the districts. One of the lesser performing districts had public exposure of some potential improprieties or the appearance of improprieties with regard to campaign contributions and contracts for district construction projects. One of the better performing districts appeared to have fiscal problems related to the passage of levies but not the kinds of fiscal control problems alleged in the other districts.

School Facilities Planning

Alpha. In Alpha district numerous problems with school facilities occurred due to the age of the buildings and lack of proper maintenance over the years. The district financial crisis of 1999 prompted the administration to look seriously at enrollments and facilities. In early 2000 a round of building closings was announced. After allowing for public comment, the board closed four buildings. Three more were closed over the next two years. The property under one

downtown school was sold after a controversy covered by the media. In 2002 a levy was placed on the ballot to raise funds for the district to gain state matching funds for the renovation or replacement of every building in the district.

Beta. The school buildings of Beta district operated at approximately 72% of capacity. The district planed to renovate or rebuild each building, increasing capacity in the process. If the lower enrollment projections and the increased capacity come to pass, the district's buildings would operate at about 44% of capacity in five or six years. The district has already passed the levy necessary to raise its required match for an infusion of state moneys to pay for the renovation and rebuilding. As the district began its construction projects, it ran into well-publicized opposition to the demolition of an aging middle school. In the end, the building was torn down and replaced.

Gamma. The 1999 performance audit of the district recommended the closing of one of the district's middle schools. The district's response to the audit noted that the consultants hired by the district came to a different conclusion. In the response, published on the district's website, the district presented the case for maintaining all its middle schools.

Delta. In 1998 the district had a $110 million facilities renovation and improvement plan presented to it. This was reduced to $65 million and put into a five-year plan for the district to finance. With the advent of a new majority on the board, in 2002 a $20 million facilities plan, focused on the safety and comfort of those in the buildings, was drawn up. The district's match from the state was such a small percentage of the larger plans that the district opted for its own smaller and cheaper plan.

Summary of School Facilities Planning. The two lesser achieving school districts had significantly greater matching funds available from the state than did the better performing

districts. The reach of the facilities plans adopted by the districts correlated with the level of funding available from the state. Delta in particular reduced plans significantly as the level of local costs were considered first by the old board and then again by the board with the new majority in control in 2002.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Alpha. The special needs issues of the district have been relatively quiet in the board minutes and local media coverage over the past five years.

Beta. The special needs issues of the district have been relatively quiet in the board minutes and local media coverage over the past five years. There was some considerable expense in transporting the 44 percent of special education students not transported in district vehicles.

Gamma. The special needs issues of the district have been relatively quiet in the board minutes and local media coverage over the past five years. There have been few complaints or cases filed and those that were, typically were related to due process for placement or programming.

Delta. The special needs issues of the district have been relatively quiet in the board minutes and local media coverage over the past five years. The staff has expressed concern over the inclusion program for special education students and that was mostly about the need for training for the inclusion classroom teachers. In the last year of this study, 2001-2002, six special education teachers and nine and a half aides were added to the special education staff. Every mention of the special education program of Delta district was laudatory, including comments from parents in letters to the editor, and so forth.

*Summary of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA.)*The districts appear to be handling special education situations to the satisfaction of the parents and the community.

DeRolph School Funding Case

All four districts were members of the Coalition for Equity and Adequacy that brought this case against the state. This coalition filed a suit that ultimately led to the Ohio Supreme Court ruling of the unconstitutionality of funding of public education.

Ohio Proficiency Tests and Critics

Alpha. In the fourth and sixth grade proficiency tests over the past five years, Alpha district had only one test result that met the state standard for performance. That was in writing in 1998. For the ninth, tenth, and twelfth grade test results, the district nearly always met the standards in reading and writing, rarely met the standard for math, and had met the standard most years for tenth grade citizenship.

The report of a curriculum audit done for this district in 2001, noted that the percentage of students at or above proficiency on the state tests was low and generally declining (Audit Team, 2001, p. 116). When scores are released, the newspapers give prominent display to the low pass rates at the elementary levels.

Beta. Beta's test results were much like those of Alpha district. Only writing in 1998 met the state performance standard for the elementary levels. In the secondary level, the district met the state standards in reading and writing at the ninth and tenth grade levels bit are losing ground at the twelfth grade level. Math and Citizenship have not met the standards in the ninth and tenth grade over the past five years except for 2001, when citizenship at the tenth grade level met the standard.

Critics of the district have chided administrators for refusing to admit that the district's proficiency test scores are failures, in as much as they refer to them as opportunities for improvement. The local newspaper in analyzing test scores in the region, noted that the

percentage of students receiving federally funded free or reduced-price lunches was an excellent predictor of test scores (Plain Dealer, June 17, 2001).

Gamma. In the fourth and sixth grades' test results over the past five years, Gamma district has shown consistent success in students' passing the writing test. Earlier fourth graders were meeting the citizenship standard but not from 1998 to 2001. At the secondary level, the districts' students have been meeting the standards for reading, writing, and citizenship, but not for math in the ninth and tenth grades. At the twelfth grade the districts' students have been meeting all the state standards for passage rates except for math in two years and citizenship in one year.

Delta. As with the other three districts in this study, Delta district has not been meeting the state standard for passing rates on the fourth and sixth grade mathematics and reading tests. In the fourth grade the district has been succeeding in writing but has declined from earlier success in citizenship. In the sixth grade, the district has been successful in both those areas. At the secondary level, the district has been meeting the state standards for all test areas (mathematics, reading, writing, and citizenship), improving their performance over earlier years in mathematics at the ninth, tenth, and twelfth grade levels.

Delta district has consistently ranked highest in student performance on the proficiency tests among Ohio's 21 districts designated as urban districts. Recent events have focused more attention on the results and the possibility for improvements. First was an audit in 1998 that urged the governance leaders to communicate the message that "We can do better!" Second, critical comments have been appearing in the newspapers noting that being at the top of the Urban 21 is not saying much about the quality of the district's schools, even questioning the inclusion of the district in the Urban 21. Finally, the state's recent movement toward

disaggregating data has been increasing local awareness of disparities in performance and increasing the expectations for student performance in the district.

Summary of Ohio Proficiency Tests and Critics. Across the four districts there was a noticeable weakness in student performance in the elementary levels where, particularly in the two lesser performing districts, the students rarely passed the proficiency tests in numbers that met the state standards. By the secondary level the districts had students performing well enough to meet the majority of the standards for the tenth and twelfth grade levels. The two better performing districts had better performance, most noticeably at the elementary level and maintained an edge at the secondary level.

In terms of the critics, it appeared that there might be a fine distinction between the critics of the lesser performing districts and the better performing districts. In the lesser performing districts the focus and rhetoric appeared to be on the failure of the district and in the better performing districts the focus and rhetoric acknowledged the lower passage rates but emphasized higher expectations rather than past failures. It appeared from some of the data that the lower performing districts were more likely to advance a poverty-related argument as a way to explain low test results.

Long Range Planning

Alpha. Alpha district has hired a strategic planning consultant almost yearly over the recent past. Since 1995 the district has produced at least eight long range plans: (a) School Improvement Program Report 1995-1998, (b) Educational Reform Plan 1998, (c) Strategic Plan 1998, (d) Comprehensive Improvement Plan 1999-2000 (e) Continuous Improvement Plan 2000, (f) District Technology Plan 2001-2004, (g) [draft] Strategic Plan 2000, and (h) Comprehensive 3-Year Plan for Change. No descriptions were found of how any plan fit with the others. When

an audit team reviewed the plans in 2001, the team reported that the scope of planning was not adequate and that the plans were inconsistent in design and lacking in clear linkages to district plans. (Curriculum Management Audit, 2001, p. 26).

Indicative of the situation in the district as this study was underway, in April 2001 the district established and the board adopted (in June 2001) the Comprehensive 3-Year Plan for Change. This plan had four major areas: (a) improve student learning and academic achievement, (b) increase parent and community involvement, (c) improve school and district climate and customer relations, and (d) improve fiscal responsibility. As the plan was put into operation, there were not apparent connections made between this plan and others in the district. Then when the November 2001 elections brought a new majority into power on the board, they announced a new focus and four key initiatives: (a) literacy and math, (b) professional development, (c) student behavior, and (d) accountability.

Beta. Historically, Beta district's administration has not placed a high level of importance on long-range planning. The district has not had a comprehensive long-range capital plan to identify and guide spending and maintenance of its facilities. Nor has the district prepared long-range financial forecasts in the past.

A performance audit of the district identified a lack of financial management procedures and a lack of sound internal procedures and controls. Even though the district was scheduled to receive capital improvement funds from the state for renovation and construction of school facilities, the district appeared to lack a comprehensive facilities master plan. This in turn has hindered the district's ability to perform long-range financial planning and budgeting, at least in the area of facilities renovation and maintenance.

Gamma. This district had a strategic plan document, including time lines, on its website, although it is password protected and takes an extra step—getting a password—to view it. It involved drafting and subsequent board approval of statements of mission, vision, and critical issues. The initial work of the Strategic Planning Task Force was to be shared with the community and then action planning was to be undertaken. The action plans were presented to the board for action in June 2001.

Another long-range plan was the district's Continuous Improvement Plan adopted in September 1999. Working from the data contained in previous district report cards published by the state, the planners identified six critical areas and distributed 72 improvement strategies across those areas. The critical areas were (a) teaching and learning, (b) assessment, (c) professional development, (d) facilities and environments, (e) organization/governance/resource leveraging, (f) family/business/community involvement.

Delta. Delta district did have a district strategic plan that was revised in 1997. However, a performance audit in 1998 noted that while all buildings in the district had continuous improvement plans (CIP), the district did not have one. Also, the same year a state audit report noted the lack of long-range budget forecasts and the lack of a capital improvements plan. Subsequently, the district began, in 1998, the development of a district CIP that was adopted by the board of education in mid-2000. This plan was viewed as supportive of the 1997 District Strategic Plan and funneled the district's commitment to four goals: (a) improve student achievement, (b) increase the district wide attendance rate, (c) improve proficiency test scores, and (d) increase graduation rates.

Looking at the fiscal situation, a failure to plan adequately is a fundamental reason why the district found itself bordering on fiscal collapse. Since the state auditor's report in 1998, the

district has undergone a series of changes (new treasurer; new, activist board member, new board majority, and public attention focused on finances) that resulted in improved fiscal planning, a five-year capital repair plan, a facilities plan, and a five-year budget plan.

Summary of Long Range Planning. Both of the lesser performing districts and one of the better performing districts had problems with their fiscal affairs and planning. They also were found lacking in their district improvement plans. One district, Alpha, apparently had a plan-of-the-year with little or no integration from plan to plan. Another, Beta, apparently had not published any district plan for improving student performance. These were the lesser performing districts. Of the better performing districts, one apparently developed a plan and made it available to the public through its website and the other was supporting building plans without a district plan, although it has since developed a district plan. There was not a clear, black-and-white distinction between the long-range planning of the lesser and better performing districts, but there were shades of gray differences.

Contractual Issues

Alpha. In terms of employee contracts, bus drivers settled a contract in early 2002 and teachers settled before school opened. For the five previous years there had been both relative calm and a wage freeze on teacher salaries. The 2002 contract had a reasonable raise and received a strong majority endorsement.

There were two non-employee contractual issues that attracted attention in the district, both in 2001. Local television media claimed multiple contracts, excessive costs, and an appearance that phone usage was out of control. The district sought to refute the claims but damage had been done. The second situation related to the district's plan to buy-out a contract

for outsourced custodial (facilities management) services. The buy-out costs were nearly $900,000 over two years.

Beta. In moving toward a new contract with teachers, the district experienced a strike in early 2002. Settlement was reached after a short strike. As a result of the strike, things were extremely tense in the buildings. Attitudes and testy behaviors were still apparent with relationships quite strained.

There were three major non-employee contractual issues attracting public attention in recent years. One was a regional youth drug counseling and treatment program for which the district served as fiscal agent. Residents of the community complained that the program did not have enough youth from the district enrolled in the program and wanted preferential admission based on their residence. Two was the district's apparently ineffective supervision of contracts for services, particularly the custodial services. Three was more prospective in that it involved maneuvering on the part of minority contractors to be guaranteed a specified portion of contracts for the district's renovation and rebuilding plan. The board was offering to guarantee 30 per cent of the project while the minority contractors wanted 60 per cent. Both parties apparently worried more about the size of the pie than if such a division of the pie was constitutionally allowable.

Gamma. Teacher, administrator, and staff contracts expire in the summer of 2003.

Delta. Contractual issues in three areas gained the district significant media attention over the five years from 1996-1997 to 2001-2002. The first area was that of employees' master contracts. The state auditor focused attention on the costs of the contracts as a root cause of the district's fiscal crisis. The teachers' workload was cited as relatively low and the compensation as relatively high. Recent negotiations have sought to address those issues by increasing the workload some. Both the teachers' and the staff's unions agreed to three-year contracts in 2001.

The leadership of both unions was ever-present and vocal at board meetings but has not been belligerent.

The second contractual issue revolved around the renewal, extension, and finally non-renewal of the superintendent's contract. This was tied in with the changing majority on the board of education with the outgoing majority granting the contract extension and the new majority issuing the non-renewal. The board and the superintendent negotiated a settlement that had the superintendent leave the position.

The third contractual issue revolved around administrative contracts and raises. Early in 2001, before settlements with the district's unions, the superintendent proposed and the board authorized raises for district administrators. The board granted raises to more administrators and at greater costs than the superintendent had proposed or the treasurer budgeted for. This action was duly noted and commented on by the teachers' union president.

While not exactly contractual issues, the district does have a number of intra-district and inter-district collaborations. The intra-district collaborations were primarily instruction related and business/financial advisory. The inter-district collaboration is the Urban School Initiative through the Ohio Department of Education.

Summary of Contractual Issues. Only one of the four districts had labor contract troubles that included a strike, and that was one of the lesser performing districts. One of both the lesser performing and the better performing districts had contracts that seemed to have low workloads for pay received. In the lesser performing district the skewed ratio related to custodial services, and in the better performing district the imbalance was in the number of teachers. In both of the lesser performing districts and one of the better performing districts, there were contractual issues that received significant media, and hence public, attention. In the lesser performing

districts the issues were around contractual services, while in the better performing district it was about the contracts and remuneration of the administrators.

Court Cases Related to Governance Issues

Alpha. The case of significance during the past five years was Alpha's decision to sue the State for funds to implement a federal desegregation order. The district requested approximately 400 million dollars and settled for 32.5 million. The district has recently come out from under the control of the federal court and the desegregation order. The district was a member of the Coalition for Equity and Adequacy and through it a party to the DeRolph et al., Appellees, v. The State of Ohio et al., Appellants case before the Ohio Supreme Court.

Access to public records was the key issue in another case involving the district. The district settles the case for $600.

Beta. The Beta district had court cases that related to governance in three general areas over the past five years. Taxpayers seeking to prevent the tearing down and replacement of an aged building as part of the district's facilities upgrade filed one case. The building was torn down. Nevertheless, some parents fighting the middle school closing felt that mismanagement will result in future difficulties with the proposed building schedule and funding support. The researcher also believed that this might occur, especially with regard to the middle school closing.

The second area of court action was over the transfer of land from Beta district to a neighboring district. The state magistrate hearing the case recommended rejecting the land transfer. The third area of court cases involved personnel issues where the board was accused of reverse discrimination in the termination of employment of a number of employees.

The district was a member of the Coalition for Equity and Adequacy and through it a party to the DeRolph et al., Appellees, v. The State of Ohio et al., Appellants case before the Ohio Supreme Court.

Gamma. There have been minimal complaints or cased filed. What cases there were typically have been related to due process requests in special education placement or programming situation. These typically are not governance issues. The district was a member of the Coalition for Equity and Adequacy and through it a party to the DeRolph et al., Appellees, v. The State of Ohio et al., Appellants case before the Ohio Supreme Court.

Delta. There has been nothing in this category related to governance. The district was a member of the Coalition for Equity and Adequacy and through it a party to the DeRolph et al., Appellees, v. The State of Ohio et al., Appellants case before the Ohio Supreme Court.

Summary of Court Cases Related to Governance Issues. Participation in the Coalition for Equity and Adequacy was common to all four districts. The two districts with better student performance had less involvement with the courts over governance issues than was the case for the districts with lesser student performance.

Structural Provisions for Governance

Alpha. The superintendent and district department heads set the agenda for the board meetings. A curriculum management audit in 2000 found the policies related to the governance of curriculum inadequate with many critical policies missing. The turnover in administration, reorganization of the district into clusters, frequent changes in building level administrators, and lack of clear organizational charts that defined responsibilities created an atmosphere where administrative regulations were vague and not enforced.

Beta. The board organized itself into four committees, each chaired by a board member. These committees were power bases. They operated with a staff under the control of the designated board member.

The most common governance issues to come to public attention were around financial controls, or rather the apparent lack thereof. In 2002 the local newspaper detailed the district's significant overpayments for properties and its willingness to pay exorbitant fees to consultants. In the state auditors performance audit of 1999, the auditor noted that the district had little or no proof that contractors ever performed more that 2.6 million dollars in maintenance work for which payments had been made. Some double-checking found instances of double billing, over billing, and billing for work never done. The auditors also found over 400 instances where the district failed to certify the availability of funds to pay a vendor, as required by state law. Additionally, there were 20 cases where the money spent exceeded the authorized amounts by hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of dollars.

Gamma. The board was organized into 12 committees each of which has one or two board members as members. From September 1998 through October 2001 the district had five different organization charts. Among the changes was the revision of the administrator to whom the principals reported. Over the five charts they reported to the assistant superintendent, the superintendent, the special assistant to the superintendent for operations, the associate superintendent for operations, and the associate superintendent for educational services. Lines or responsibility/authority for a number of other district operations underwent similar movements. In all, the district could be characterized as having significant indecision on the structure of senior management positions.

Delta. The board organized itself into six committees, each chaired by a board member and having no more than two board members as members. There was a pattern of expansion of the administrative team from 1998-1999 until 2002. In 2002 there was a pattern of contraction. In 2002 the board hired a new business manager and had the new administrator report directly to the board rather than to the superintendent. The board's policies were reviewed and updated on a regular basis with a number of governance related revisions since the new majority took control of the board in January 2002. Prior to 2002 the performance audit by the state auditor noted that school administrators and teachers had very little to say about the governance of their schools or the system at large. Decision-making was centralized in the district administrative staff. Recent changes by the board would appear to leave administrators with even less control over educational programs in their buildings unless they can fund them on their own.

Summary of Structural Provisions for Governance. All four districts appeared to have some form of committee structure for its board of education. One of the better performing districts had an unusually large number of committees—most districts with committees tend to have one per board member other than the president of the board; this district had a dozen committees for a five member board.

Change, movement, and reorganization seemed common to all four districts. One difference, though, was that for three of them it seemed to have been constant throughout the five years considered in this study. For the fourth, one of the better performing districts, the most significant changes occurred in the last half of the last year under study, although there were changes prior to these more recent events.

Centers of Influence

Alpha. The researcher believed that during the past five years the evidence indicated the centers of influence were primarily: (a) management and changes in management, (b) state reviews and policies, (c) media coverage, and (d) legal concerns. In the time prior to 2002 the board and management of the district seemed to react to outside factors rather than follow through on their own plans and goals. The recent change in board membership appeared to have resulted in tighter management and perhaps more micromanagement by the board.

State reviews, the performance and financial audits, put focus on the bottom line, the balanced budget, and fiscal controls. Additionally, state policies regarding charter schools impacted the district fiscally. Media coverage, because of its broad audience, had wide impact. The media has charted much of the district course over the last five years by the fires it has lit and forced the district to react. Finally, legal considerations, such as the desegregation and concomitant busing order have moved resources in ways the district might not choose for the future now that the federal court has removed the busing order.

Beta. In reviewing only the last five years, the most apparent centers of influence were: (a) state performance and financial audits; (b) the local media; and, (c) local and area business providers. The board continued to react to pressures from these centers of influence. Unfortunately, there was no effective community voice. Disparate community elements, while upset with specific issues (such as, closing of a middle school), were unable to present a united front detailing their concerns and suggestions for improvement.

The performance and financial audits conducted by the state auditor forced the district to emphasize the need for a balanced budget and fiscal controls. On top of all the financial errors of commission, the state's new charter school laws have negatively impacted the district's finances

because so many families have exercised this option. This exacerbated the budget difficulties for this small urban district. Other than the influence by the local media that highlighted each and every known illegality, alternate centers of influence have not been as visible. While there was no effective community voice, there were strong efforts to influence the board. It seemed that the companies that contributed to the levy campaigns and to the election campaigns of the board members influenced the way the contracts were let. Even so, the local minority contractors seemed unable to bring about the high number of set-asides for minority contractors that they desired.

Gamma. During the past five years, there appeared to have been five major centers of influence in Gamma district. First, and most influential, appeared to be the various citizen action groups such as a Strategic Planning Task Force, the Lay Finance Advisory Committee, and the Citizens Financial Oversight Committee that surfaced during levy campaigns. Second were the media. The occasional coverage by the large urban paper and the more regular coverage by the local newspaper brought reaction from the district. Third were the city governments in the two cities served by the school district. Fourth were the private schools located within the district and serving approximately 10% of the student population of the two cities. Finally, there were the relations with the employee unions and the union contracts. There were seven union contracts, all on the same contract period, and all achieved without major hurdles. This suggested an attentive and successful negotiations climate.

Delta. In Delta district there appeared to be six major centers of influence on district governance. The primary consideration driving all decisions from early to mid-2002 was fiscal responsibility. The district operated with the fiscal planning documents in mind: the five-year budget plan, the five and ten year enrollment projections, and the five-year capital repair plan.

Prior to 2002, specific academic issues and plans appeared to be the primary influence. For example, a plan to implement all day kindergarten and the middle school concept was underway until the new board majority. After the new board majority took office, those initiatives were shelved pending state mandates.

The second center of influence since the start of 2002 was state mandates. With the new fiscal focus, attention to the academic program was more likely to come in response to state mandates than anything else. All day kindergarten was an example of this.

The third center of influence over the past five years was the collaborative participation in the Urban 21 Initiative of the state. It was this participation that prompted the performance and fiscal audits that were instrumental in driving other changes in the district. The performance audit raised expectations for academic performance. The financial audit brought the fiscal situation to the public and, arguably, brought about the election of the new board majority and the demise of the superintendent.

The fourth influence was the union contracts that limited the district in its ability to direct the teaching and staff work forces. Fifth and sixth were local policies and court decisions, particularly the much anticipated and four times enunciated decision in the state funding case, known as DeRolph.

Summary of Centers of Influence. In the two better performing districts, it appeared that district plans, especially those with community input, were a major center of influence in the governance of the district. This was not as evident in the lesser performing districts. Those districts seemed more influenced by public opinion than by the plans of their administrations.

All the districts were influenced by state mandates, union contracts, and, to a limited extent, the anticipated state Supreme Court decision on the state funding of education.

Data Based Decision Making

Alpha. Board members received packets of information prior to each meeting and data were included for decisions that were to be made. However, according to the Curriculum Management Audit of 2001, data driven decisions were lacking. Evidence suggested that despite some data driven decisions, such as the selection of building for closure in 2001, vocal visitors to the board meetings had the same or greater influence than financial data. Examples abound that the board was more reactionary than action oriented over the five years considered in this study.

Beta. Perhaps one story illustrated the state of data based decision making in this district. In March 2001, a financial audit bore good news and bad news for the district. The good news was that the district received $1.8 million in 1998-1999 (the most recent year covered by the audit) than in 1997-1998. The bad news was that the district was unaware of the additional money because of poor bookkeeping.

Gamma. Upon receipt of the state auditor's performance review audit, Gamma's board asked one of its lay committees to involve the public in a review of the findings and report back to the board. While the review committee accepted, in whole or in part, 78 per cent of the performance audit's recommendations, they did reject 22 percent because they were based on flawed data, were impractical, or were in conflict with the law or other recommendations. This was taken as indicative of some data based decision making on the part of the board. At the same time, the recommendation by the review committee that a Total Quality Management program be instituted for all employees was taken as indicative that the district could do better, or more, data based decision making than it had been.

Delta. Delta district arguably talked about using data for making decisions, but it didn't do it well or consistently as evidenced by some of the recommendations from the state auditor.

The district regularly collected information from the community by means of surveys, but the public record held no indication of how the data was used. Tellingly, at a board meeting in 2002 the president of the teachers' union asked about the survey and requested a copy of the results. Even a person active in district affairs evidently did not see the data in use. Toward the end of the period under study, there seemed to be greater utilization of financial data and projections than in the past.

Summary Data Based Decision Making. The public record of the districts did not demonstrate a high level use of data in making decisions related to the governance of the districts. In the better performing districts there appeared to be a greater attention to implementing data based decisions based on the performance and fiscal audits than in the lesser performing districts.

Access to Data

Alpha. Access to the district information sought was moderately accommodating to the researcher. Changes in personnel and job responsibilities during the eight months of the study created unanticipated problems, some of which were minor.

At the end of this study, in the summer of 2002, there was an easily accessible school calendar on the district website for all planned board and committee meetings.

An outside consulting firm was hired for many years to complete (publish and market) a strategic plan for the district. But these finished products were not mentioned at a later date nor were any easily accessible to the researcher. At the end of 2002 the Alpha district board of educations goals and objectives were on the district website under the label "Strategic Initiatives."

Beta. The district was quite accommodating in providing information as requested by the researcher. Unfortunately, they simply did not have access to a significant segment of the information, which was needed; or, the information that they had was not complete. An example was newspaper articles. The district readily opened its files and shared the clippings that they had, but not all stories that featured the district were included in the files made available.

At the end of 2002, the district website provided very little information about the district beyond the school calendar and directory information about the schools.

Gamma. The district was very accommodating in providing information as requested by the researcher.

At the end of 2002 the district website was very sophisticated with links to much of the governance documents of the districts—board meeting agendas and minutes, strategic initiatives and goals, continuous improvement plans, Ohio proficiency test outcomes, and so forth.

Delta. The district was very accommodating in providing information as requested by the researcher.

In this district an outside firm had been hired for many years to prepare strategic plans for the district. But the finished products were not mentioned at a later date, nor were any easily accessible to the researcher.

At the end of 2002 the district website was very sophisticated with links to much of the governance documents of the districts—board meeting agendas and minutes, board policy manual, Ohio proficiency outcomes, and so forth. However, some of the board minutes from the meetings when the extension of the superintendent's contract was at issue were not on the website as of the end of 2002.

Beta. The district was quite accommodating in providing information as requested by the researcher. Unfortunately, they simply did not have access to a significant segment of the information, which was needed; or, the information that they had was not complete. An example was newspaper articles. The district readily opened its files and shared the clippings that they had, but not all stories that featured the district were included in the files made available.

At the end of 2002, the district website provided very little information about the district beyond the school calendar and directory information about the schools.

Gamma. The district was very accommodating in providing information as requested by the researcher.

At the end of 2002 the district website was very sophisticated with links to much of the governance documents of the districts—board meeting agendas and minutes, strategic initiatives and goals, continuous improvement plans, Ohio proficiency test outcomes, and so forth.

Delta. The district was very accommodating in providing information as requested by the researcher.

In this district an outside firm had been hired for many years to prepare strategic plans for the district. But the finished products were not mentioned at a later date, nor were any easily accessible to the researcher.

At the end of 2002 the district website was very sophisticated with links to much of the governance documents of the districts—board meeting agendas and minutes, board policy manual, Ohio proficiency outcomes, and so forth. However, some of the board minutes from the meetings when the extension of the superintendent's contract was at issue were not on the website as of the end of 2002.

Summary of Access to Data. The better performing districts generally made more information available through the district website than did the lesser performing districts. This was particularly true concerning district policies and the strategic and continuous improvement plans of the district. However, it was interesting to note that several of the districts, one lesser performing and one better performing, might have sought to censor the information available to the public about particular board meetings. In one case it was a videotape of the meeting that was ordered censored and in the other it was failure to post minutes for the meetings during which there was significant controversy.

Leadership/Management

Alpha. Leadership and management were critical factors in every one of the 12 recommendations from the Curriculum Management Audit of 2001. Student achievement was seldom mentioned in board minutes from 1996-2000. However, the goal of improvement student achievement is the underlying force driving the new board's four key initiatives.

Beta. Numerous reasons related to both leadership and management contributed to Beta's spending more for support services than for instruction over the five years reviewed for this study. Among the examples of weak management were failure to promptly and properly forward withholding taxes for a year, failure to record $1.8 million in revenue for a fiscal year, failure to convert the district accounting system from cash accounting to accrual accounting through 2001, approximately $2.6 million in unbid work given to 20 maintenance contractors over seven years, and record keeping so poor the district's books were deemed not auditable for a recent year. Even more worrisome than the individual examples of incompetence, loose bookkeeping, and possible graft was the overall sense that no one was watching what happens to taxpayer money in the Beta school system (Plain Dealer, May 26, 2001).

Gamma. In the strategic plan of the district, five of the seven areas involved academic achievement. Sixty-one action plans were developed toward the accomplishment of those seven goals. Of those 61 action plans, only five have teachers as wholly or partially responsible for accomplishing the given tasks.

Delta. The story of the Delta district over the five years of the study was very much the story of leadership and management. One view of the tension between leadership and management was that of the superintendent prior to the new majority taking control of the board in 2002. In those days the superintendent was undeniably a strong educational leader in the district. At the same time the superintendent was not the best manager, bearing a share of the responsibility for the cycle of severe cuts in times of need and excessive spending following the influx of new money.

Vis-à-vis the board, the superintendent was the dominant force until 1999. With the performance audit highlighting shortcomings of the district and the resignation of a board member in protest of the superintendent's control of the board, the superintendent's credibility was ruined for the long haul. The superintendent maintained a favorable majority through 2001 even with a very critical member on the board.

After the elections of 2001 and the installation of a new majority on the board in 2002, the district saw a shift in power toward the board and the board getting more involved in management. This was evidenced particularly by the board having the new business manager report directly to the board rather than to the new superintendent.

Summary of Leadership/Management. Some poor management practices, particularly about the management of district spending, were found in both the lesser and the better performing districts. Strong, consistent leadership was more evident in the better performing

districts than in the lesser performing districts. In one of the districts, it appeared that the board provided strong leadership through utilization of a number of committees that utilized community members in their membership. The other district saw strong educational leadership by the superintendent give way in later times to strong leadership by the board with a focus on improving the management of the district funds.

E-governance

Alpha. Communications were received regularly from all over the state at the administrative level. Within the district, internal communications have increased dramatically from 1998 to 2002. At the end of 2002 neither board agendas nor minutes were posted electronically.

Menus on the district website allowed visitors to find calendars for board meetings, the names of board members and e-mail links to some of them, names and e-mail links to administrators, directory information about the district's school buildings, and information about many of the administrative functions of the district. The board's policy manual was available on line, also. Even though the front page of the district's Continuous Improvement Plan on the Ohio Department of Education website could be gotten to via a link from the district website, access beyond that front page was password protected.

Beta. The district had a website but the information provided was very limited and of little use in learning about the district or its operations. While e-mail was used, it was not used as much as might be expected in an urban school district. Even middle managers tended to utilize a paper trail rather than depend on e-mail. Internet activities were limited, especially for instructional purposes

Gamma. E-mail was used extensively internally as it was becoming more popular in business-to-business operations with vendors and grantors. Communication with administrators and staff members was possible through e-mail although the electronic staff directory cautions against expecting a reply to an e-mail unless you know the intended recipient uses e-mail as many do not have computers and do not check for their e-mail.

The district evidenced wide use of its wide-area network capabilities. The web site offered comprehensive access to calendars, board agendas, school announcements, instructional resources, and staff development opportunities, to name a few.

Delta. While the district did have e-mail available to its employees, their e-mail addresses were not evident on or through the district's website. Links to board member e-mail addresses were available on the website, although not clearly evident as such. Telephone numbers and regular addresses were readily available.

The district evidenced wide use of its Internet capabilities for the dissemination of information. Among the documents available via website links were board meeting agendas and minutes, the board policy manual. An interesting note about the minutes was that minutes for four months in 2001, including months when the superintendent's contract extension was at issue were not on the website as of the end of 2002. The district also used the website as a vehicle for collection of a survey of teachers related to technology implementation. In the final months of the study, the website had a link to a commercial web maintenance organization, providing evidence that the district was interested in monitoring public access to the site.

The district recently won an award for the design of its website.

Summary of E-governance. Three of the four districts in this study had begun placing board governance documents and plans onto the district website. While information had become

available through the website, more was possible as evidenced by the differences in what the districts have chosen to make available. One lesser performing district had the least information and access available through its website. Of the other three, the two better performing districts had the more sophisticated and information rich websites.

Final Comments from the Researchers

Alpha. Funding issues remained an important, driving force in this district. This urban district was in critical need of financial support that matched the scrutiny the state was then exhibiting with its numerous accountability measures.

At the local decision-making level, the new (2002) board's goals had been articulated and remained a focus for the administrative team. The new superintendent (August 2002) echoed the board's plans and priorities. At question was how long will there continue to be one voice directing the district and with what strength?

The researcher believed the district was poised for improvement at the close of the research phase. The changes in management and leadership (both at the professional and elected levels) appeared to be critical foundations for positive change within this district. Likewise, the state support for building improvements was within reach and sent a positive message to the local taxpayers who want to support the local schools.

Beta. Taking a final look at the Beta school system, one saw a school system that was in desperate need of help if it was to support its students' full potential. The difficulty presented to the district was that its problems and concerns were so intertwined that finding a starting point was nearly impossible. The community obligated to support this school system was nearly the poorest in the state. Supporting the schools had become secondary to fulfilling basic needs, even when the schools could give the community's children the potential to fulfill much more than

basic needs. The board members, charged with carrying a vision of improving the community and the school system, were charged, instead, with a myriad of financial blunders, both personally and as a board.

Gamma. This urban fringe district had been producing desirable results for an urban district and sought to do better. It had both pluses and minuses, as does any district. It was unusual in that it served two separate cities. Its student body was not reflective of the community, having nearly twice the minority population as the community (80% to 40%). It experienced good financial support and management over the years of the study. Its organizational structure had undergone frequent, substantial change in recent years. A new superintendent, hired from outside the district, was in place as this study concluded. The community had been actively involved, via an extensive committee structure, in the major governance decisions of the district. The strategic plan for the district did not appear to provide formal leadership roles for teachers in the various actions planned for improving the district. Information about the district was fairly well available from the district website and the district's central offices.

Delta This urban fringe district went through dramatic changes in the five years covered by this study even though its students generally led the state's urban school districts in performance. A new board majority came into power. The board developed and operated within plans to guide spending and facilities' repair and use. It instituted a leaner administrative structure, reorganized to give the board greater oversight and control of spending. It hired a new, experienced superintendent for the district. Whether the future is rosy or strife ridden will be determined by several factors. Among those factors would be the desire and the extent to which the board wants to retain decision making power or conversely the willingness of the board to let

its professional staff operate, the openness of the board to the community's desire to influence its decisions, the willingness of the superintendent and the administrative staff to accept board member intrusion into their administrative roles, and the durability of the new majority on the board.

Summary of Final Comments from the Researchers. All four districts had financial issues with which to contend. In two of the districts, one of the lesser and one of the better performing districts, the fiscal issues were a contributing, if not the primary, cause for the change in superintendents. Those same two districts had new, reform-minded majorities take control of their boards in 2002.The question for the future in all four districts was what will be the balance between finances and academic achievement established by the governance players of the district?

Interpretation

As one might expect when studying only urban school districts and those all in one state, there were many commonalities between the districts. The comparison of the governance characteristics of two of the higher performing and two of the lower performing districts in the state was not striking. As representatives of several of these districts informally noted during the 2002 Conference on Governance in Ohio Urban School Districts, they are far more alike than different in their problems, issues, and needs. Nonetheless, several subtle differences can be noted.

Summary of Major Conclusions

There did not seem to be noticeable differences between the two pairs of districts in several of the topical areas researched. We found that the districts appeared alike on the DeRolph v. State of Ohio funding lawsuit, on levies as dominating the major events of the districts' recent

histories, and the handling of IDEA requirements (in that they seemed to satisfy their communities so that it was not an issue that distinguished them). Also, all the districts used a committee structure as an organizing mechanism for the board with differences only in the number and or names of the committees.

There were some differences among the districts in the contractual issues they faced and the level and distribution of human resources for the operation of the districts. These differences, however, were not identifiably different on the basis of higher or lower performing districts. Some other factor was at work in those situations.

The first noticeable difference between the higher and lower performing districts was with the economics of the districts' communities. The lower performing districts had lower median house family incomes and a higher percent of families living in poverty than did the better performing districts. While not directly an aspect of governance of the districts, the economic situation of a district's population was certainly something that those governing the district had to take into consideration as it sought improved performance from its students. The poverty levels of the communities probably accounted for the greater state funding available to the poorer-lower performing districts than to the better-off and better performing districts.

The board members as governance leaders in the lower performing districts seemed to focus more on personal issues than those in the better performing districts. The focus for the better performing districts tended to be more on district improvement than on personal agenda.

In looking at the OPT and critics of the district's performance, it seemed that in lower performing districts the focus of the critics was on past failures. In the better performing districts, the critics seemed to take a future orientation and focus on higher expectations. The difference is subtle but potentially significant in moving a district forward.

All the districts had long-range plans. A difference between the two sets of districts might be that the lower performing districts seemed to have multiple, apparently separate long-range plans, one after the other, while the better performing districts seemed to have had fewer but somewhat related plans that were more accessible to the public both during and after the planning process.

In reviewing court cases in which the districts were involved, insofar as they were mentioned in the public exposure of the district, it seemed that the lower performing districts were involved in more court cases than the better performing districts. At the least, the public exposure of their court cases was less for the better performing districts than the lesser performing districts.

From the public record of the districts, it appeared that the better performing districts tended to seek and obtain community involvement in the planning and/or decision making processes before major policy issues came before the board. On the other hand, the boards of the lesser performing districts appeared to bring policy issues up and then seek or accept public comment and be swayed by it after the district staff had developed the policy and/or action plan.

There was not clear evidence of much reliance on data as the basis for decision making in the governance of the four districts. Nonetheless, it seemed that the higher performing districts tended to base their decisions on data more than did the lower performing districts. Although not necessarily a causal relationship, the better performing districts did appear to make more data available in their public exposures than did the lower performing districts. It appeared that more data were available to the board members as well as the public in the higher performing districts than in the lower performing districts.

All four districts exhibited some poor management practices, especially about fiscal management. However, strong, consistent leadership seemed more evident in the better performing districts than in the lesser performing districts. In one of the better performing districts the strength and consistency seemed to come from the board. In the other district it seemed to come from the superintendent.

E-governance did not seem to be a major factor for any of the districts although the higher performing districts did appear to have more information available on their websites than did the lower performing districts.

Limitations of the Study

The limited number of districts included in this study certainly limited the ability to generalize the findings and the conclusions to a larger context. The aspects of governance in which some differences were found might simply be the result of the sample and not of true differences between higher and lower performing urban districts.

This study was limited to urban districts in the state of Ohio wherein they are governed by the same statutes and state court decisions. Urban districts in other states might not parallel these findings due to differences in governing law whether legislative or court decisions.

While an attempt was made to view the governance of these districts from multiple aspects, the view still was restricted to a limited number of variables. While the researchers believed the aspects chosen would be the most telling, it still must be said that an examination of some different aspects might have given the different results and conclusions at least in some areas.

While the researchers selected to conduct the case studies were all experienced and committed academic researchers with knowledge of K-12 schooling and administration, three of

them did not live in or near the districts they were studying. Their level of awareness of the public exposures of the districts they were studying might have been different if they lived in the district or at least in the same media region as the district. To compensate for that, the project provided the researchers with subscriptions to the daily and weekly newspapers that typically published news about the district under study by the individual researcher.

The definition of urban districts borrowed and utilized by the researchers (student enrollment of over 5,000 with more than 5% of the students receiving Aid to Dependent Children) would call into question any attempt to generalize this study's conclusions to the largest urban districts.

Significance of Study

While the conclusions of this study cannot be put forward as definitive statements about the differences between higher and lower performing urban school districts in Ohio, they do offer several important contributions to the study of urban school district governance. This is one of the few studies to try and relate district governance and student achievement. It appears to be the only one focused on a comparison of higher and lower performing urban districts that operate under a common legal system. As such its conclusions offer possible directions for future research on differences between districts both to seek replication of the findings and to develop a means for an urban district to study the effectiveness of its own governance practices.

Going a step farther, if further studies confirm even some of the conclusions of this study, it may be possible to develop an instrument or tool to diagnose the effectiveness a district's governance policies and practices. Such an instrument would enable governance leaders to analyze themselves and generate self-knowledge that should lead to improvement of the governance of the district. Also, the existence and use of such an instrument by the media or the

general public might focus the accountability of governance leaders on issues that truly make a difference to the primary purpose for the existence of the school district, student achievement.

There are two lines of research that could be next steps from this research. One is to begin the development of a checklist or inventory of governance policies and practices that appear correlated to student achievement in urban districts. Potentially, this would yield means to use publicly available data to create comparative "dash board" indicators to monitor the relationship between governance and achievement. At this time a combination of information from the literature, the experiences of those who consult with boards of education, and research like this could provide for a set of exploratory concepts with value for leaders of urban school districts. The second line of research would be the duplication of this effort in other states with multiple urban areas, followed up with comparisons across stateliness. It is hoped that these two lines of research might lead to public education indicators preferable to, or in augmentation of, the heavy reliance of high stakes achievement tests to assess the quality of education.

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Appendix A: Ohio Revised Code 3317.012 and Operational Definitions

ORC Section 3317.012

(A) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HAVING ANALYZED SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPENDITURE AND COST DATA FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996, PERFORMED THE CALCULATION DESCRIBED IN DIVISION (B) OF THIS SECTION, AND ADJUSTED THE RESULTS FOR INFLATION, HEREBY DETERMINES THAT THE BASE COST OF AN ADEQUATE EDUCATION PER PUPIL FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 1998, IS $4,063. FOR THE FIVE FOLLOWING FISCAL YEARS, THE BASE COST PER PUPIL FOR EACH OF THOSE YEARS, REFLECTING AN ANNUAL RATE OF INFLATION OF TWO AND EIGHT-TENTHS PER CENT, IS $4,177 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2000, $4,294 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001, $4,414 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2002, $4,538 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003, AND $4,665 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004.

(B) IN DETERMINING THE BASE COST STATED IN DIVISION (A) OF THIS SECTION, CAPITAL AND DEBT COSTS, COSTS PAID FOR BY FEDERAL FUNDS, AND COSTS COVERED BY FUNDS PROVIDED PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 3317.023 AND 3317.024 AS THEY EXISTED PRIOR TO JULY 1, 1998, FOR DISADVANTAGED PUPIL IMPACT AID AND TRANSPORTATION WERE EXCLUDED, AS WERE THE EFFECTS ON THE DISTRICTS' STATE FUNDS OF THE APPLICATION OF THE COST-OF-DOING-BUSINESS FACTORS, ASSUMING AN EIGHTEEN PER CENT VARIANCE.

THE BASE COST FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996 WAS CALCULATED AS THE UNWEIGHTED AVERAGE COST PER STUDENT, ON A SCHOOL DISTRICT BASIS, OF EDUCATING STUDENTS WHO WERE NOT RECEIVING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OR SERVICES PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 3323. OF THE REVISED CODE AND WHO

WERE ENROLLED IN A CITY, EXEMPTED VILLAGE, OR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT THAT IN FISCAL YEAR 1994 MET ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

(1) THE DISTRICT MET AT LEAST ALL BUT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:

(a) A THREE PER CENT OR LOWER DROPOUT RATE;

(b) AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF FOURTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE MATHEMATICS TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER DIVISION (A)(1) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(c) AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF FOURTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE READING TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER DIVISION (A)(1) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(d) AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF FOURTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE WRITING TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER DIVISION (A)(1) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(e) AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF FOURTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE CITIZENSHIP TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER DIVISION (A)(1) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(f) AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF NINTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE MATHEMATICS TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER FORMER DIVISION (B) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(g) AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF NINTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE READING TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER FORMER DIVISION (B) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(h) AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF NINTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE WRITING TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER FORMER DIVISION (B) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(i) AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF NINTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE CITIZENSHIP TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER FORMER DIVISION (B) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(j) AT LEAST EIGHTY-FIVE PER CENT OF TENTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE MATHEMATICS TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER FORMER DIVISION (B) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(k) AT LEAST EIGHTY-FIVE PER CENT OF TENTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE READING TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER FORMER DIVISION (B) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(l) AT LEAST EIGHTY-FIVE PER CENT OF TENTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE WRITING TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER FORMER DIVISION (B) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(m) AT LEAST EIGHTY-FIVE PER CENT OF TENTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE CITIZENSHIP TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER FORMER DIVISION (B) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(n) AT LEAST SIXTY PER CENT OF TWELFTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE MATHEMATICS TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER DIVISION (A)(3) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(o) AT LEAST SIXTY PER CENT OF TWELFTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE READING TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER DIVISION (A)(3) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(p) AT LEAST SIXTY PER CENT OF TWELFTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE WRITING TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER DIVISION (A)(3) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(q) AT LEAST SIXTY PER CENT OF TWELFTH GRADERS PROFICIENT ON THE CITIZENSHIP TEST PRESCRIBED UNDER DIVISION (A)(3) OF SECTION 3301.0710 OF THE REVISED CODE;

(r) AN ATTENDANCE RATE FOR THE YEAR OF AT LEAST NINETY-THREE PER CENT AS DEFINED IN SECTION 3302.01 OF THE REVISED CODE.

(2) THE DISTRICT WAS NOT AMONG THE TEN PER CENT OF ALL DISTRICTS WITH THE HIGHEST INCOME FACTORS, AS DEFINED IN SECTION 3317.02 OF THE REVISED CODE, NOR AMONG THE TEN PER CENT OF ALL DISTRICTS WITH THE LOWEST INCOME FACTORS.

(3) THE DISTRICT WAS NOT AMONG THE FIVE PER CENT OF ALL DISTRICTS WITH THE HIGHEST VALUATION PER PUPIL IN ADM, AS REPORTED UNDER DIVISION (A) OF SECTION 3317.03 OF THE REVISED CODE AS IT EXISTED PRIOR TO JULY 1, 1998, NOR AMONG THE FIVE PER CENT OF ALL DISTRICTS WITH THE LOWEST VALUATION PER PUPIL.

Anderson's Ohio Session Law. Retrieved August 21, 2001 from http://ohioacts.avv.com/122/hb650/sec-3317.012.htm

Operational Definitions: of Criteria for Selecting District for This Study, Based on the Criteria Use to Determine the Base Cost of an Adequate Education in Ohio.

As written in ORC 3317.012	**Accepted/Revised for use in this study**
(1) The district met at least all but one of the following performance standards:	
(a) a three per cent or lower dropout rate;	(a) high graduation rate (drop out rate not reported for all years)
(b) at least seventy-five per cent of fourth graders proficient on the mathematics test prescribed under division (a)(1) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(b) per cent of fourth graders proficient on the fourth grade OPT mathematics test
(c) at least seventy-five per cent of fourth graders proficient on the reading test prescribed under division (a)(1) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(c) per cent of fourth graders proficient on the fourth grade OPT reading test
(d) at least seventy-five per cent of fourth graders proficient on the writing test prescribed under division (a)(1) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(d) per cent of fourth graders proficient on the fourth grade OPT writing test
(e) at least seventy-five per cent of fourth graders proficient on the citizenship test prescribed under division (a)(1) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(e) per cent of fourth graders proficient on the fourth grade OPT citizenship test

(f) at least seventy-five per cent of ninth graders proficient on the mathematics test prescribed under former division (b) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(f) per cent of ninth graders proficient on the ninth grade OPT mathematics test
(g) at least seventy-five per cent of ninth graders proficient on the reading test prescribed under former division (b) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(g) per cent of ninth graders proficient on the ninth grade OPT reading test
(h) at least seventy-five per cent of ninth graders proficient on the writing test prescribed under former division (b) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(h) per cent of ninth graders proficient on the ninth grade OPT writing test
(i) at least seventy-five per cent of ninth graders proficient on the citizenship test prescribed under former division (b) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(i) per cent of ninth graders proficient on the ninth grade OPT citizenship test
(j) at least eighty-five per cent of tenth graders proficient on the mathematics test prescribed under former division (b) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(j) per cent of tenth graders proficient on the ninth grade OPT mathematics test

(k) at least eighty-five per cent of tenth graders proficient on the reading test prescribed under former division (b) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(k) per cent of tenth graders proficient on the ninth grade OPT reading test
(l) at least eighty-five per cent of tenth graders proficient on the writing test prescribed under former division (b) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(l) per cent of tenth graders proficient on the ninth grade OPT writing test
(m) at least eighty-five per cent of tenth graders proficient on the citizenship test prescribed under former division (b) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(m) per cent of tenth graders proficient on the ninth grade OPT citizenship test
(n) at least sixty per cent of twelfth graders proficient on the mathematics test prescribed under division (a)(3) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(n) per cent of twelfth graders proficient on the twelfth grade OPT mathematics test
(o) at least sixty per cent of twelfth graders proficient on the reading test prescribed under division (a)(3) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(o) per cent of twelfth graders proficient on the twelfth grade OPT reading test

(p) at least sixty per cent of twelfth graders proficient on the writing test prescribed under division (a)(3) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(p) per cent of twelfth graders proficient on the twelfth grade OPT writing test
(q) at least sixty per cent of twelfth graders proficient on the citizenship test prescribed under division (a)(3) of section 3301.0710 of the revised code;	(q) per cent of twelfth graders proficient on the twelfth grade OPT citizenship test
(r) an attendance rate for the year of at least ninety-three per cent as defined in Section 3302.01 of the revised code	(r) attendance rate for the year

Appendix B. Selection Criteria Results

Ohio Proficiency Test Results, Graduation Rates, and Attendance Rates—Four Selected Urban Districts—1996-2001

(Scores that are above the state's target passing level are highlighted.)

Dist-Year	Grad Rate	4 Math	4 Read	4 Write	4 Citizen	6 Math	6 Read	6 Write	6 Citizen	6 Science	9 Math	9 Read
Alpha												
2001		20	25	54	22	23	24	57	30	18	38	80
2000	56.5	14	23	48	22	18	20	64	37	18	36	80
1999	62.4	18	28	35	33	20	23	66	42	16	41	84
1998	62.6	22	38	29	50	19	26	80	39	18	42	82
1997	58.7	18	38	37	47	17	21	62	35	13	39	82
1996	56.2											
Beta												
2001		16	20	51	21	24	22	57	34	22	33	79
2000	64.4	16	26	44	29	24	26	72	46	24	32	78
1999	50.9	19	33	30	35	15	26	70	41	11	30	83
1998	50.8	26	44	44	56	15	25	83	40	14	30	89
1997	50	20	42	46	58	16	23	64	35	7	25	79
1996	53.2											
Gamma												
2001		58	53	82	58	45	46	80	57	44	69	94
2000	91.8	49	58	75	60	38	39	76	60	37	69	89
1999	93.4	49	65	76	70	43	50	80	68	39	67	89
1998	82.5	60	69	60	80	39	47	85	58	37	66	88
1997	79.4	50	65	66	78	39	47	69	62	34	55	87
1996	89.6											

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Dist-					10				12		
Year	9 Write	9 Citizen	10 Math	10 Read	10 Write	Citizen	12 Math	12 Read	12 Write	Citizen	Attendance
Delta											
2001		60	64	88	71	68	67	89	76	69	7592
2000	96.2	53	68	85	69	60	64	83	80	59	7892
1999	96.7	50	64	76	81	57	62	87	84	54	7593
1998	93.6	62	74	76	87	53	65	94	78	57	7091
1997	85.9	55	66	74	81	53	54	84	75	47	7392
1996	84.4										
Alpha											
2001	82	58	66	97	97	87	79	64	40	52	
2000	87	61	66	95	97	85	32	41	70	46	85.9
1999	90	64	63	95	97	82	34	62	83	47	85.9
1998	85	65	68	97	97	86	44	67	71	62	86.5
1997	73	59	69	97	95	88	39	75	70	63	87
1996											83.7
Beta											
2001	86	64	55	94	97	87	24	42	76	40	
2000	86	61	48	95	96	79	18	33	74	36	92.4
1999	91	59	44	92	96	81	20	47	86	46	94.2
1998	95	72	43	94	93	84	31	75	81	65	89.8
1997	74	67	43	92	90	83	17	65	59	54	89.1
1996											89
Gamma											
2001	93	85	84	98	99	93	65	74	93	71	
2000	93	81	82	98	99	89	57	62	89	66	95.2
1999	95	77	83	98	99	88	50	70	87	54	93.2
1998	96	77	76	96	98	90	67	86	88	78	94.4
1997	91	74	67	95	97	86	65	85	85	74	94.2
1996											93.9

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Dist-Year Delta	9 Write	9 Citizen	10 Math	10 Read	10 Write	10 Citizen	12 Math	12 Read	12 Write	12 Citizen	Attendance
2001	96	86	86	97	98	93	68	81	96	76	
2000	96	87	86	97	99	93	61	66	88	70	94.2
1999	95	84	83	97	99	92	56	70	85	67	94.2
1998	95	83	84	98	99	92	64	86	85	82	94.7
1997	88	83	84	95	96	94	54	77	72	69	94.5
1996											94.3

(Ohio Department of Education, 2002, retrieved September 16 and December 29, 2002, from http://www.ode.state.oh.us/)

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